

# **Doctor in Education**

**‘Professional Misrecognition Among Teachers:  
the Dark Side of the Moon?’**

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**Ed.D Thesis**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this Thesis is entirely my own.

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**Doctor in Education (Ed.D)**  
**Summary Course Statement**  
**Keith Richmond**  
**October 2000 to November 2005**

This is a personal statement about all elements of the Ed.D programme of study undertaken by me over the last five years. In this statement, I aim to show a) how my professional and academic interests have developed and changed direction during the period of study, b) how I have integrated the various elements comprising the degree, and c) how this course of in-depth study has enabled me to gain greater insight into my own professional context and trajectory, along with the impact it has had on my own practice as a teacher. I also outline the indirect benefits to the school of the involvement of colleagues in the substantive research focused on professional practice.

The four assignments bound together for the first of the courses were: Foundations of Professionalism (FoP), Methods of Enquiry 1 (MoE 1), Methods of Enquiry 2 (MoE 2) and the Initial Specialist coursework (Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment). Each course involved the submission of a 5000 word essay and all were judged to be successful. It was at the stage of the initial specialist course at the beginning of the second year when my research interest changed, from previous intentions, to understanding more about the discursive positioning of teachers and how this influenced their professional values and classroom practices. This research theme started with a specific interest in Ofsted inspections and their impact on enacted pedagogies in the classroom, but has become a more wide-ranging enquiry into the educational ideologies that provide teachers with their stated professional values. Through the empirical work undertaken for the Thesis, I became interested in gaining insight into how a phenomenon I refer to as 'professional misrecognition' determines professional practice in a discursive manner. To this end, the I.F.S. (an Institution Focused Study of 25,000 words) constituted the pilot for the main research activity developed in the final Thesis.

Initially, involvement in the seminars for the Foundations of Professionalism course seemed rather too theoretical and abstract for me. The course seemed to be unrelated to the highly practical, essentially 'hands-on' nature of my work as a primary practitioner dealing with the day-to-day needs of children, their parents and colleagues. However, the more deeply absorbed by the course set-readings I became, the more obvious some of the recurring themes surrounding the nature of professionalism, its state of flux and the reconfiguration of teacher professional identity became themselves. I supplemented the set readings with a more in-depth reading of other theorists - both educational and broadly sociological - in order to understand more extensively the issues relating to the whole notion of public and teacher perceptions of professional identity within a broad socio-political framework. What began as the perception of a tangential relationship between theoretical literature and my own enacted practice in a school, led to a clearer understanding of my context in a wider professional sense.

My research interests first led to an exploration of a specific aspect of the professional work and identity of primary teachers. This was explored through my own experience as a middle manager in a larger primary school in which there had been a perceptible shift in such roles. Essentially, I saw that this change involved a shift from a traditional model of *teacher-as-pedagogue*, to a different model of teacher as policy and resource *manager*. The Foundations assignment came to a limited conclusion that this reconfiguration did, in fact, appear to be a possibility in my own school. It enabled me to explore these overarching occupational concerns within a disciplined academic framework and to begin to explore the literature on organisational theory and micro-politics.

This perception of a change in my own role, as I was compelled to adapt to successive government induced changes, made me increasingly uneasy. I had become sceptical about where teaching was going: how it had changed, even during my eleven years in the job. In a vague sense, this realisation was a factor in choosing to undertake the Ed.D, since I had become increasingly annoyed by what I saw as the bullying of teachers by politicians and by the media. In order to 'survive' professionally, I realised that I needed a productive and disciplined activity through which to channel this unsatisfied intellectual energy. Such was not really the case during three years' part time study towards an M.A. in Education, since this had been very much focused on a specific aspect of teaching and learning, which was already embedded within customary practice. Having decided at first to continue with earlier work for the M.A., in which I examined the provision of educational visits and journeys, I did not at this stage expect that my research interests would have altered by the end of the four taught courses completed in the first year and a half. The initial plan to extend my interest in the pedagogical value of educational visits was realised in both Methods of Enquiry 1 and Methods of Enquiry 2 assignments.

Despite the subsequent revision of my research interests for I.F.S. and Thesis, M.o.E 2 gave me an opportunity to put into practice the proposal written for M.o.E 1. The project was a useful exercise in practising qualitative research techniques in a limited manner, but with a *real* professional objective as the outcome. The issues and problems associated with questionnaire design and the analysis of data collected from pupils in a qualitative context became more apparent as I guided them through the piloting process. I also read a considerable amount of theoretical literature alongside the practical undertaking, and the final assignment (including the limitations of my efforts) was clearly influenced by it.

The successful completion of both Research Methods courses also provided me with an opportunity to write in another context. The course tutor suggested that I might usefully write a journal article about my novel approach to researching alongside pupils, as active participants in the research process. This was subsequently published in the Institute's Journal of Doctoral Research; *Educate*. This was a good opportunity to practise writing in a context other than for an essay, and it is something I had already done both before and

after the M.A., resulting in a book for teachers published by Collins as well as various journal and magazine articles.

What appeared to be an upward research trajectory by building on earlier M.A. work, through the completion of both Methods courses for Ed.D and linking this interest to the readings for the Initial Specialist course in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment was, however, about to be challenged by a new and more pressing interest. This was entirely due to a change in my professional role within the same school, and after being promoted to Acting Deputy Headteacher. While already in a senior post as Assistant Head, this change gave me a more strategic role in helping to manage every aspect of the school and followed an Ofsted inspection, the third I had experienced in ten years. The relevance of these biographical details to the Ed.D relates to the change of academic direction caused by this change in my professional circumstances.

As a result of three consecutive inspections, it occurred to me that much of the source of my occupational frustration could be understood theoretically through a reading of Foucault (1979). In his work, Foucault uses the metaphorical notion of a 'panopticon' to describe ideological regimes imposing multiple forms of surveillance. For me, the Ofsted process of inspection represented just such an instrument. This growing awareness led me to alter my original plan to investigate the value of educational visits. The change was due to a feeling that greater involvement in the running of the school meant that it had become a more relevant and pressing concern. Frankly, I needed this kind of thorny issue to motivate me to commit to further and more involved research and it has satisfied this professional and intellectual need immensely. The issue was explored first in the final shorter assignment in Term 4.

The last Ofsted inspection, in November 2001, was a critical moment for me, both professionally and in terms of taking the next step towards the I.F.S. as a part of the research degree. What struck me was the apparent impact this process had on the way that we conducted ourselves during the period preceding the big event. Teaching, administrative and ancillary staff alike were caught up in a scramble simply to survive, as we saw it. When I looked back at the school's previous inspection report in 1997, and its recommendations for further school development, I was surprised by the number of changes that had taken place as a direct response. Such changes were not purely organisational or bureaucratic, but had irrevocably altered the essence of the teaching and learning philosophy in the school. The changes had partly been brought about by Curriculum 2000, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and our almost imperceptible, unchallenged adoption of the Q.C.A. Guidelines on teaching the National Curriculum. Indeed, the latter had effectively replaced the school's own curriculum plan without anybody seeming to consider what this change meant in terms of the school's limited autonomy in determining how the Statutory Orders were to be taught. Under pressure to implement the National Literacy and Numeracy Schemes, the school adopted the highly prescriptive curriculum schemes published by Q.C.A., along with the content-focused pedagogical style associated with them. All of this happened in the school with

little or no professional debate about the wisdom or value of these new educational trends.

As well as tangible changes to the curriculum and pedagogy outlined above, there also seemed to be a more subtle and 'osmotic' process happening: it affected teachers who began to adopt Ofsted-preferred approaches in their teaching. These views were often based on anecdotal evidence from the friends of colleagues in other schools; that, for example, Ofsted liked to see lesson objectives written on the classroom board for children to read at the start of each lesson. On its own, such knee-jerk behaviour in anticipation of an inspection was to be expected and seems reasonable. Taken as part of the wider 'discourse' on the combined effects of government education policy and its major instrument of control through Ofsted, it appeared to me that a major shift in the professional autonomy of teachers was well underway in my own school too. I was interested to explore the possibility that the process of increased control of pedagogy, as well as the overt and visible control of curriculum, really did have an impact on teachers' classroom practices, both consciously - as in the example from my own school highlighted above - and at a deeper, less conscious level. The assignment for the Initial Specialist Course provided me with an opportunity to assess some of the literature related to this topic. The 'Ofsted effect' on pedagogical practice, as I discovered through this assignment, does seem to exert an increasingly powerful hold on what goes on in classrooms day-to-day. This was the realisation that gave rise to work for the I.F.S. in the form of an extended empirical pilot study and, now, the final Thesis.

The final research enquiry for the Thesis took an unexpected turn after the earlier work to include a broader range of occupational themes identified during the pilot, all of which appear to exert a collective influence on teachers' professional thinking. This approach proved necessary in order to avoid too narrow a theoretical perspective on the issue, as suggested in the research that follows and referred to as 'professional misrecognition'.

The exploration of this phenomenon among colleagues for this Thesis has given me an opportunity to expiate, to some extent, my occupational frustrations relating to teacher professionalism, and to do so in an intellectually productive manner. More than this, the school-based research that was the end result has had a tangible effect on the openness of debate in the school about curriculum and teaching methods. Through my own involvement as a key member of the group involved in reviewing the school's policy on teaching and learning - and through the participation of these colleagues in the interviews - we have been able to reclaim some professional ground by *thinking* carefully about the ideological forces at work on our institutional practices. The result was a revised curriculum framework allowing teachers greater freedom in selecting for emphasis certain elements of the National Curriculum, based on the interests of specific year groups. This now makes allowance for increased professional freedom for teachers to make desired pedagogical choices throughout the school.

**‘Professional Misrecognition Among Teachers: the Dark Side of the Moon?’**

**ABSTRACT**

Are teachers really conscious of the extent to which their professional thinking is directed?

Through this small-scale study I looked for an answer to this question. My motivation was to understand more about my own active location within a professional context. This research contributes to wider debates about what can be metaphorically understood as the *dark side of the moon* of the collective, occupational thinking of teachers. It provides an exploration of what lies behind their consciously held views: what informs teachers’ classroom practices and their stated pedagogical beliefs.

I build upon a theory that I have explained as *provisional compliance* among teachers, a phenomenon identified with the help of colleagues in earlier I.F.S. pilot work. This focused on teachers’ experiences of Ofsted inspections and their professional responses to being inspected. Here, my colleagues are portrayed as workers for whom the scope for deep thinking about their roles as primary school teachers is restricted to a limited and ideological set of possibilities.

It is argued that this phenomenon is creating a subtle and real professional re-orientation in teachers’ minds. A clearer understanding of such *professional misrecognition* at the level of the individual can provide teachers more widely with an opportunity to counteract the de-professionalising effect of politically derived, mass thinking in our schools.

The research method is adopted from institutional ethnography for a study located within my own workplace. Data for the empirical investigation were collected in a loosely structured, oblique interview format. The recorded conversations between colleagues revealed a pattern of professional misrecognition. Such misrecognition may be understood if teachers are explained as being psychologically defended workers who are undergoing a fundamental professional re-alignment to prevailing educational ideologies.

Crucially, this research suggests a new means for teachers to exercise greater intellectual freedom by reconciling their professional identities with ideological imperatives and thinking.



# Part 1

## Introduction

In education '*nothing matters much and most things do not matter at all*'. These words are attributed to Arthur Balfour, Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905, at the time of the introduction of the 1902 Education Act. In sixteen years of conscientious and successful work as a primary school teacher, this nihilistic mantra has often proved a refuge for me, too, when faced with some of the frustrations of the job. Yet the flippancy implied by this comment has not proved as intellectually safe for me as, perhaps, I had hoped. In education, as in any complex and contentious field, most things do in fact matter. One particular facet of the occupational identity of the teacher - of my identity as a teacher - matters very much to me and has given rise to this research.

For some time, I have had a hunch that something is changing in teaching. It is palpable. I expect change always has been palpable, but there is, in my view, a change on the professional horizon of teaching that is more than simply a passing mist (and more real than merely trite metaphors intone!).

I have noticed this change among colleagues and others, but also from within my own occupational position, and it bothers me. What could be changing is the scope for thinking about teaching and learning within the occupational contexts of teachers themselves: so abundant and far-reaching are the officially sanctioned approaches to almost every aspect of teaching activity (from the National Curriculum, to officially approved pedagogies and how teachers

interpret policies in order to frame their own and pupils' work in the classroom) that teachers now have little or no room for intellectual manoeuvre in thinking about their jobs. Of course, there is nothing new in arguing that teachers are becoming either *deprofessionalised* (Hargreaves 1996) or indeed *reprofessionalised* (Barnett 1997), despite the abundance of in-service diplomas and 'professional' masters degree courses (Revell 2005). It is actually very 'post modern' to assert, not just that teaching is not a profession at all, but that the very term *profession* is now an outmoded one for any occupational activity in the post-industrial world, especially teaching (Gordon 1983; Hargreaves 1994; Greenfield 2005). I want to contribute to these debates by showing that, more than simply occupying an ever-shrinking professional horizon imposed on them, teachers themselves restrict their potential for widening that horizon again. This is not because they cannot think for themselves, or that *nothing matters much* to them, but that they have a delimited range of possibilities for thinking about their roles for themselves (Coldron and Smith 1999), and about how their practices are discursively accomplished (Fairclough 1995). Worse still, they may not even be conscious of their shrinking professional horizons.

They are, perhaps, working under a condition of professional *misrecognition*, whereby they have come to believe that mandated educational practices are synonymous with forms of effective teaching that are beyond doubt or question. Thinking about this possibility for teachers in the present occupational climate, even as a possibility for me, has caused the intellectual worry that has driven on this research in the professional context of my own school. This research now

builds on earlier work undertaken as part of an Institution Focused Study, which, in fact, formed the pilot study for what follows. This earlier research sought to establish whether Ofsted inspection had a direct influence on teachers' approaches to classroom practice, both during and beyond the event of inspection itself. It led me to suggest that:

- inspection did not fundamentally affect the pedagogical practices of teachers, *from the points of view* of the teachers concerned;
- effects of inspection on routine classroom practice were not conclusively identified as a feature beyond the actual event of inspection itself;
- teachers who took part largely conceived themselves as being knowingly complicit in a professional *game* (i.e. inspection), the success of which determined individual and institutional outcomes;
- those who took part may have given an *incomplete* account of the degree to which inspection contributes to teacher practice and professional identity, raising the question that the pedagogical influence of Ofsted inspections may act at a less conscious (but more subliminal) level and that this is still to be more fully understood.

It is this last point - the less consciously thought about effects of discursive influences (e.g. Ofsted inspection) - that I examine by means of a more focused study to investigate what teachers say about their professional roles and how it relates to enacted practices in the classroom. Consequently, the research forms a natural evolution of the empirical and methodological approach undertaken for

the Institution Focused Study and it derives its empirical approach, too, from the earlier pilot study.

My earlier work led to a conceptualisation of the respondents as being *provisionally compliant* (Richmond 2003). I found that they were located in a complex array of professional positions, in relation to their experiences of, and attitudes towards, inspection. These positions were variously identified as, and termed, 'compliant', 'resistant' and 'provisional'. The whole study was predicated on the belief and personal experience that inspection does, in fact, affect pedagogical practices in the classroom, an idea that has already been acknowledged in earlier topic-specific literature (Sandbrook 1996).

However, I found any such effect to be underestimated by the participant teachers; i.e. a prevalent view that any effect was, instead, relatively minor and short-lived. Colleagues who took part in the research suggested that they still retained a professional core as fundamental to the ways in which they preferred to work, and that this core practice was unaltered in any permanent fashion either because, or in spite, of the present system of school inspections. At the same time, colleagues also disclosed that they were able to accommodate conceptions of performance when under the pressure of being inspected, as a matter of professional expediency and survival. They did this, they suggested, as complicit, yet consenting and pragmatic workers, acting with a full awareness of inspection and management scrutiny as a professional *game* to be endured and, in some cases, won in an adversarial spirit.

In spite of the ambivalent responses to my initial research question, in this research I continue to challenge assumptions about such forms of evaluation as simply being a transient, necessary evil with which teachers have to contend in an otherwise unaffected professional landscape. The overarching question left unanswered in the earlier research remains, although my earlier findings have enabled me to broaden my particular hypothesis, through conducting the pilot empirical work, in order to examine the impact of inspection as one of *a number of influences* on the daily practices of teachers.

The particular and final question that emerged during the course of the pilot study is, then, advanced here. Is there a case to be made for a *subconscious*, as opposed to straightforwardly self-aware, effect of prevalent discourses on classroom practice? Ofsted itself has recently begun to contribute to discussions about which teaching methods it advocates or prefers (TES 2003), and teachers seem to be all too aware of these arguments.

My original review of a range of existing literature, related to public accountability, management discourses and Ofsted inspection, specifically supports the value of searching for less obvious effects of dominant discourses on teachers. This is made clear both through the discourses on the impact of inspection on teachers as individuals (Becher 1989; Hargreaves 1996; Jeffrey and Woods 1998; National Primary Centre 1996), and in the call for more highly focused research activity specifically related to the inconclusive, but nevertheless interesting, findings in my earlier pilot work. I suggest that it is a dimension of teaching which has yet to be more fully explored and is

undertaken in this work in a specific and professionally relevant context. As Sandbrook (1996:10) suggests:

‘There can be little doubt that the inspections I have studied have left a significant mark on the professional lives of their participants. *It has been less clear how long these effects might last, or whether there will be other consequences, developmental or otherwise, on the quality of the teaching and learning in... schools.* To track the *effects* of inspection as they percolate through a staff and its professional consciousness would need further research’. (my italics)

This possibility - the gradual *percolation* of Ofsted-driven or induced pedagogies - is of key interest here. It demands this question to be examined again, beyond the specific subject matter in the pilot study, if I am to learn whether or not what I later explain as professional misrecognition is an identifiable phenomenon for these teachers.

Among the factors that I set out to understand about the professional positions of teachers in this research are:

- factors related to an individual’s experience of being inspected and evaluated, and their positions (conscious or otherwise) in relation to these experiences;
- factors related to the confidence of individuals and their consciously-held, *or stated*, educational values;
- factors related to the degree to which teachers (constructed in the pilot research as being *provisionally compliant*) work within institutional and

political discourses that may or may not be *consciously enacted* and understood fully by them.

The last point above is the most crucial one for this research. This study is intended to make a contribution to an important professional debate through its examination in the form of a further institutional study by delving deeper into my original hypothesis that inspection, for example, *does* have a significant impact on the practice of teachers. I go further to argue that such influence is exerted far beyond the event of inspection itself. I suspected that teachers with whom I work were undergoing a subtle and possibly hidden re-orientation in their professional identities. If this is the case, the identification of inspection as a factor in the discourses surrounding teacher professionalism and teacher 'professionalisation' - or their significance in relation to what has been called teacher 'colonisation' (Ball 1992) and 're-orientation change' (Ball 1997) - will contribute to a wide-ranging educational debate.

### **What do I mean – misrecognition?**

As described above, the overarching central question asked in this research is whether it is possible to find out *what* teachers are in effect *mis*-recognising, or possibly hiding, in carrying out their pedagogic roles. Other related research (e.g. Edwards 1987:42) indicates that there are identifiable 'ground rules of educational discourse' which are hidden, but may be uncovered, in day-to-day classroom interaction between pupils and teachers. Is there, then, a kind of *hidden discourse* between teachers in a single school setting, related to their approaches to teaching their pupils? This question demanded an intimate

knowledge of school policy in relation to teaching and learning, and the way in which it organised the curriculum at an institutional level, comparing stated aims and practices and the manner in which teachers enacted or interpreted such policies.

By interviewing colleagues about their professional ideas and understandings, I aimed to elicit how teachers put official policies into practice, alongside their own ideas about what leads to professional effectiveness (Keddie 1971). As well as identifying an expected relationship between policy and practice, I also found relationships between teachers' views on determining pedagogical practice within broad institutional frameworks in ways that suited their own personal preferences. An apparent rift identified, between stated school aims and the personal versions of enacted practice favoured by individuals, made it possible to conceptualise my colleagues as 'defended subjects' (Hollway and Jefferson 2003) in their pursuit of the professional 'craft' of the classroom (Marland 1975; Woods 1996), while being subjected to powerful and multiple discursive influences on their work that had the potential to threaten their individualism or feelings of personal commitment.

In order to understand teachers as defended subjects, we need to consider the possibility that they, like other workers, attempt to suppress unpleasant or difficult aspects of the job. According to this paradigm, they 'split' from themselves the occupational demons they perceive, and respond to an inner calling to achieve an idealised professional identity. This behaviour, it is argued in the following analysis of interview data, is at the heart of professional



misrecognition. The point of convergence here - between a teacher's preoccupation with mastering the teaching situation and the feelings of slight discomfort this engendered - was central to this exploration of professional perspectives. It suggested that teachers might adopt psychologically defensive positions partly as a result of the incongruity between professional self and private person and, as a consequence, misrecognise some of their attitudes about how they accomplish teaching.

This speculation came about despite what some of my colleagues claimed and in ways, I am suggesting, that were hidden even from the teachers themselves. Part of the methodological stance adopted, one of critical enquiry borrowed from Crotty (1998), examines the *meanings* ascribed by colleagues to school and government policy. Through this examination it was possible to challenge received ideologies and commonly held values and assumptions about conventional institutionalised structures and norms.

The interview approach undertaken for the pilot I.F.S. has been adopted here too - and from narrative ethno-methodology more generally - in trying to elicit what lies behind stories told by teachers about the way they say they behave, pedagogically, in the classroom. It required a subtle research approach to discern what is arguably a hidden and subconscious phenomenon, referred to throughout this thesis as professional misrecognition, and affected by ideologically-orientated or discursive 'positionings'.

I did need to take account of some of the theory surrounding psycho-analysis in occupational contexts in order to make sense of this conceptualisation of teachers as defended subjects. To do this, I drew on a suitable theoretical model to gain insight into the 'psycho-social' positions of these individuals (Hollway and Jefferson 2003:23-24) as subjects under a subtle, but no less real, influence derived in part from teachers' ideas about what official mandates demanded from them (Britzman 1998) and the stress this pursuit can generate (Troman 2001). These theorists have developed interesting ideas about what 'psycho-social' approaches, as they are called by Hoggett (2000) for example, can contribute to our understandings of the ideological positioning of teachers and they are relevant to this research.

Seen from within a psycho-social paradigm, the meanings which the teachers attributed to systemic demands appeared to be simultaneously professional investments and emotional experiences, a dimension of teacher identity that emerged through the interviews. The complex nature of professional identities is why the teachers in this study were portrayed as 'unconscious, defensive and inter-subjective' participants (Hollway and Jefferson 2003:19) in a process for whom - it was conjectured - the true professional impact of officially sanctioned ideologies was believed to be located within the occupational psyche of each individual.

The subliminal nature of some of these hidden investments in the identities of my colleagues was a major consideration. It posed the intriguing challenge to attempt to appreciate how teachers develop their own self-images about what,

and how, they like to be as workers, and indeed how they want to be seen by others (Zizek 1989:105). This aspect of the research has drawn on inferences in the earlier I.F.S., which concluded that taking individual stories at face value might be an inadequate way to explain or identify the deeper influence of professional influences (such as inspection) on teacher behaviour (Convery 1999).

This is why a theoretical framework for understanding teachers as defended subjects, as being simultaneously psychic (as individuals with unique emotions) and as social beings (in their constructions of a collegial or professional mantle), provided a way of interpreting people's stories about individual pedagogic approaches in the classroom. What also emerged was a greater variety of influences on classroom practice than a restricted focus on Ofsted inspection would have shown.

In this study, then, I came to understand teachers as *psycho-social defended subjects*, being positioned among a variety of contemporary educational discourses, dominated among other things by Ofsted, in which Ofsted is an extant feature of occupational life. I examined these positions specifically in relation to individual professional trajectories, and sought, through interviews with colleagues, to encourage them to disclose the manner in which they had negotiated and resisted internalised conflicts to which external and school demands give rise, possibly leading to a state of professional misrecognition.

I had speculated in the I.F.S. pilot, and have found in the course of this research, that unconscious defences generated by teachers to preserve them against anxieties, induced by inspection and institutional demands, illuminated teachers within their own professional situations in a fascinating and novel way. Teachers, who might have thought themselves to be fully cognisant and professionally alert, might also have been working in circumstances that led to a phenomenon that it seems reasonable to frame as a professional form of '*misrecognition*' (Bourdieu 1976; Lacan 1986). By acknowledging Bourdieu's theories, in particular, relating to *socially* constructed misrecognition in this occupational context, it can be shown that teachers may recognise certain ideological attitudes, not indeed as such, but as fundamentally and solely their own, due to the perceived *naturalness* of these social constructions. This possibility arguably gives rise to a subtle, almost imperceptible, professional reorientation. This might have been due, in part, to the 'colonising' effect (Ball 1997; Broadfoot 1996) of an Ofsted-preferred model of classroom practice. According to this idea, teachers in the school had become so imbued with teaching approaches and the pedagogical values promoted through Ofsted inspection, that Ofsted practice appeared to have colonised their daily work. A dual dimension - 'good practice' being carried out by 'good teachers' (Moore 2004) - appeared to become synonymous with Ofsted's values. This interesting idea did emerge as a unifying theme during the interviews carried out with colleagues.

Working in professional collaboration with colleagues who were central to this study, and researching their practice to examine potentially hidden meanings in

their disclosures, was clearly a delicate ethical course to steer (Hargreaves 1994; Woods 1985), especially if vexed questions about authenticity and individuals' abilities to 'know' themselves in a highly charged and powerful educational establishment had to be answered in designing an effective interview schedule to address these issues. It posed the major methodological challenge, too, if I was to avoid reproducing teachers' self-representations as more than simply comfortable and superficial 'palliatives'. As Convery (1999) argues:

'Researchers of teachers' stories should be attempting to destabilise teachers' single interpretations of their experiences, and should be seeking to discover what [their] stories inevitably conceal, rather than focusing on, and endorsing, what they pretend to reveal... It is vital to escape from these well-intentioned, patronising accounts... which claim to recover and relate authentic experience' (*ibid.*, pp.140- 144).

However, as an insider-researcher, I certainly had no intention of 'destabilising' colleagues or their accounts, so it was vital not to conduct the research as if, in some strange way, I could stand outside it. According to Wengraf (cited in Chamberlayne 2000), the approach adopted in this study, though powerful and potentially very revealing, also carried inherent problems relating to the authenticity of the data collected, a caution also given earlier by Berger and Luckman (1971). Such dangers were contained in the scope for multiple readings of interview texts, and the possibility that in understanding the told story in an informant's narrative, both my colleagues and I might be 'motivated to understand only in a certain way' (*ibid.*, p.145). The danger of misinterpreting, or worse, misrepresenting the voices of colleagues in a delicate co-worker/researcher context made the interviews hazardous, especially as I wanted to reach beneath methodological conceptions of self-knowledgeable

and transparent self-identities (Maclure 2003:115). Rather, I suggest that colleagues were likely to exhibit features of defence and anxiety in what, and how, they were able to tell me about themselves as teachers. I also wanted to avoid an exploitative 'mining' for gems of data from the sub-textual recording of teachers' remarks without being candid about the issues I was interested to discuss with each colleague (*ibid.*, p.119). Yet, I was keen to examine the interview texts by going *beyond* them, to take account of the semantic framing of ideas and concepts discussed with teachers and to exercise an openness in valorising these narratives by bringing my own researcher's *professional comparative knowledge* to bear on the data collected, in order to develop a new understanding of it (Wengraf, cited in Chamberlayne 2000).

By acknowledging my own voice in the process of research - and the possibility that a natural empathy towards what colleagues might say could, and would, influence what was disclosed by individuals - reminded me that the inter-subjective nature of defensiveness and how we portray (or idealise) ourselves does affect the outcome of research (Woods 1985:16).

In response to the potential criticism of my approach to this research, that insider research such as this could not achieve balance or objectivity, I argue in the next chapter that this is one of its particular strengths. The strategy adopted to gain insight into subtle and even obscured meanings in the interview data related to a desire for emergent – or *grounded* - themes (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to become apparent as a result of being an active participant researcher with an intimate (and my own inter-subjective) knowledge of the school and its

staff (Biott 1996). It took account of the possibility that teachers might simply construct convenient identities for themselves (whether self-deluding or even actively deceptive) during interviews limited by time and other possible constraints (Davies 1990). Throughout, I wanted to interrogate ideas presented by colleagues: not only ideas with which they felt personally comfortable, but to challenge these colleagues in a spirit of genuine debate but without jeopardising fragile workplace relationships (Edwards and Middleton 1986; Gordon and Gergen 1968). This was important ethically, since the teachers were, in effect, 'the data' themselves. This, of course, included me as an individual located in the research context as an active participant and, as such, just as susceptible to the notion of professional misrecognition in my own role.

The risks aside, for me, the ultimate aim of the study was to raise the awareness of colleagues about what is, arguably, an uncritical acceptance of prevailing discourses in educational practice and evaluation: discourses that deeply affect the kind of education teachers provide for their pupils. As a counterpoint to professional misrecognition, a fuller understanding of our shared work and purpose in the school, as a result of the pilot interviews, had already given rise to a more open professional debate among some staff members and, in a concrete manner, partly led to a school review involving the critical scrutiny of our curriculum and approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. This was accomplished not just because of its topical relevance (DfES 2004), but also led to the rejection of some aspects of current educational dogma and a reversion to older tried-and-tested practices. These changes are incorporated in the School's formal Development Plan for 2005/2006 (see Appendix 3).

## Part 2

### The pilot data reconsidered

A re-assessment of data from the earlier pilot study (the I.F.S.) shed some interesting light on my hypothesis that a simple dismissal of any longer term effect of inspection on teacher practice might inadequately explain the complex, sometimes ambivalent and self-contradictory attitudes of teachers towards the external evaluation of their practices. This re-examination of interview evidence collected earlier also showed how ambivalent teachers' attitudes were, and how the real extent of Ofsted-driven influence might be found within individual psyches and, as such, be little recognised as by them. To quote one teacher:

'I think my identity has changed... I feel more confident because it was a positive experience for me...It did colour how I felt about myself as a teacher'. (Richmond 2003)

It seemed that the 'atomist' ideas and views of teachers about what constitutes effective primary education (Taylor 1989), believed by teachers to be independently constructed, were complicated by multiple professional and ideological influences. These influences could create an effect that Bernstein (1996) describes as *the macro blot on the micro context* of teachers' ideas about what being 'competent' means in terms of the skills and knowledge the system requires of them. In other words, the overwhelming and heavy predominance of official discourses in educational practice may control the extent to which an individual teacher is ideologically 'permitted' to think about professional practices in an intellectually independent manner:

'[T]his idealism of competence, a celebration of what we are in contrast to what we have become, is bought at a price; that is,



the price of abstracting the individual from the analysis of distributions of power and principles of control, which selectively specialise modes of acquisition and realisations'. (*ibid.*, p.56)

This effect was identifiable among those interviewed for the pilot research and seemed to have considerable impact on the teachers' work at classroom level.

One colleague remarked:

'I didn't leave anything to chance... I researched every lesson... every word in every lesson'. (Richmond 2003)

Some of the common threads that emerged from the original data relate to what might be viewed as an *inverse effect* on teaching practice; that teachers considered inspection performances as not being teaching at all, in their terms, and that there is Ofsted practice and routine practice, but that these are different things. 'Good practice' was seen as synonymous with an idealised form of Ofsted-preferred practice, even if this could not be sustained. Another teacher said:

'Inspection is about putting on a show.... like a teaching practice inspection'. (Richmond 2003)

In terms of this research, the degree to which teachers are conscious of this distinction, as being knowingly complicit or not, becomes key to understanding the extent of such influences on developing teacher identities. Some teachers considered that preparation for inspection actually compromised the pragmatic concerns and factors that made things work effectively in the classroom. They felt that inspection could act, ironically, as a distraction from children's learning - at least during the process from a teacher's perspective - and that it creates in teachers' minds a sense of heightened reality that cannot be sustained beyond the event itself. It may be argued that this recognition on teachers' parts

relegates routine practice to a kind of undistinguished mediocrity and leads to the denigration of what politicians, through the media, have coined as the *bog standard* in education. Yet most of those interviewed believed that Ofsted inspection did offer the best available version of what passes as 'good practice', even if they could not sustain it afterwards. It was interesting to note that there seemed to be little indication from the respondents that the whole notion of 'good practice' is itself laden with ideological and historically referenced values, with a heavy emphasis on teachers as both controlling the pedagogical encounter while being controlled, themselves, from within given discourses (Bernstein 1996; Grace 1978).

Despite a growing body of pro-inspection studies (Matthews and Sammons 2004), my colleagues mostly suggested that the present system does not usually result in an individual opportunity for development among teachers post-inspection, irrespective of the ensuing institutional 'action plan'. Ofsted inspectors were regarded as judge and jury, but who could still offer an objective and legitimated evaluation of professional effectiveness. Their comments were often couched in terms of the effectiveness or 'quality' discourse (Morley 2000), although some individuals, while happy to accept praise, asserted that they would contest the criticism which is always the potential outcome of being evaluated as a 'professional'.

Inasmuch as Ofsted has allowed government and schools to construct a shared, if controversial, meaning for the standards agenda (Dale 1997), my respondents largely supported a view that such standards are made explicit and

achievable through the process of inspection. Some went further, claiming that the process of inspection, as an official arbiter of 'good' versus 'bad' practice, had become a process of the revelation of teachers' real professional selves, despite their acknowledgement of it as a non-negotiable process in the first place. As another teacher remarked:

'I do not like Ofsted inspections but that was the first inspection where we actually got feedback after the lesson. It was quite nice to know that you had passed, nice to get a piece of paper at the end saying you were O.K. as a teacher'. (Richmond 2003)

This attitude prevailed among the respondents, despite the claim made by some that *daily* practice is quite different from classroom practice for inspection. Overall, these teachers subscribed to a view that Ofsted and its inspection regime had led to what they called 'higher standards' - irrespective of the 'second-guessing' games played by teachers in giving inspectors what they thought the inspectors had wished to see - and that inspection does serve a confirmatory purpose in recognising the competence of individuals, as well as the incompetence of 'others'.

One or two teachers went further, seeing the scope for teachers to have a worthwhile professional dialogue with inspectors, provided there was the opportunity for some form of reciprocity permitted by individual inspectors, and provided that such interactions led to a positive transformation for these teachers and the school. Such teachers viewed inspection as an uncomfortable but necessary evil, believing it to act as a catalyst for a professionally located kind of reflective practice, and these teachers claimed they were fully conscious of effects on their practice such as these. They felt that the only effects on their

daily practice, post inspection, were those that had been consciously reflected upon and were deemed by the individual to offer self-improvement. This revelation in the pilot study was interesting in terms of trying to understand the extent to which teachers are conscious of such influences on their thinking. It was especially intriguing in wondering about the possibility of an emerging form of professional misrecognition among the teachers.

Some teachers regarded the whole inspection process as professionally restrictive, if not quite as professionally degrading, and of little real benefit to self-improvement:

‘I felt I wasn’t focusing on the children’s learning, I was focusing on how it appeared to the inspectors for that particular hour’.  
(Richmond 2003).

If the school as a whole were to be passive in its acceptance of inspection judgements, then the process would become unhelpful, they suggested. Equally, the possibility for public opprobrium resulting from Ofsted’s bad press often meant that teachers and schools reacted uncritically to changes that were brought about by the imperative of being inspected. This passiveness, they continued, had the consequence that inspection findings drove schools ahead blindly and without a clear sense of purpose or, even worse, confidence.

The majority of those interviewed stated that whatever the external pressures brought to bear on them by agencies such as Ofsted, and the symptomatic pressures passed down to them through school management due to inspection findings, they still retained a core professional self (see also Moore et al., 2002a).

It would be over zealous to dismiss the possibility for professional self-preservation (not simply compliance or pragmatism) among some, especially senior, teachers. The simultaneously pragmatic, yet professionally cognisant, school leader is portrayed by researchers such as Gold (2005) as most effective when practising in a state of purposeful ambivalence towards prevailing educational policy (Moore et al. 2002a). It can also be argued that some research (e.g. Wilson 1996; Cullingford 1999) too readily accepts as worthy the extant structures in education like the National Curriculum and procedures for school evaluation and pupil assessment. Even some theoretical, rather than purely professional, explorations of the values that underpin routine educational practice can neglect to take into account their implicit ideological positions (Winch 2005), so this Ed.D research takes none of these premises as 'given' or beyond question.

Looking closely at the I.F.S. interviews afresh, it seems reasonable to conjecture that professional identities may be partly based on a form of occupational *folk memory* (Bar-Tal 2002; Bakhtin 1981), passed down from teacher to teacher and derived from the conflation of motives and myths that grow out of powerful experiences - like being inspected. The teachers in the pilot research did seem to exhibit elements of *selective* memories in acknowledging post-inspection influences on their practices in the school: they gave precedence to aspects of their practice that they considered legitimised their ideas, styles and competencies. In other words, they looked for confirmatory judgements that supported their notions of professional self-

esteem, rather than contradictory ones. This, of course, is quite understandable. The comment made by one teacher: 'I think it makes you reflect more than actually change your practice' (Richmond 2003) was typical of the provisionally framed remarks made relating to inspectors' judgements about individual practice.

As it turned out, in both pilot and thesis data sets, Ofsted inspection and inspectors were perceived as guardians of a national standards agenda, at the top of a pyramidal hierarchy of power, through which professional wisdom was passed downwards to schools and teachers. For these teachers, it seemed, reflection was a luxury and it was vital for them to put policy into approved forms of practice. In other words, schools were seen to respond to what the market expected, and inspection was the mechanism whereby market forces were influenced and controlled.

Surprisingly perhaps, there was unequivocal agreement among all of the respondents in the pilot, when the issue was broached in interview, that Ofsted inspection is a reliable means of detecting those schools which have shortcomings, regarded by some as fair game in such a competitive educational culture. This was also recognised by one or two respondents as leading to knee-jerk reactions in schools towards ill-conceived government initiatives as part of the cyclical pattern of educational trends and fads - a common feature, perhaps, in the evolution of teacher practice.

This cyclical nature of educational fashion was partly ascribed to local education authority advisers and their in-service courses for teachers. These were seen to be a principal influence on practice at school level, although the respondents did not articulate any recognition that inspection might act as a *subterranean*, or obscured, influence on them due to pressure on advisers to pass on government sanctioned policies to schools.

Did, then, the teachers interviewed here betray their professional misrecognition of the hidden effects of phenomena such as inspection? Were they failing to recognise the downward, percolating influences being exerted on their professional values and practices and, if so, why?

These issues led to more questions for further investigation here, achieved through a revised 'oblique' interview approach. Was my speculation correct: that the teachers perceived externally levied effects on their work as being unrelated to school inspection? Moreover, did these teachers fail to recognise the relationship between government and inspection, between local education authorities and advisers, and themselves in the classroom? The pilot raised a number of important questions.

The teachers did seem to accept the current system as an extant and unchallengeable feature of schooling. They also saw Ofsted as a 'kind of watchdog', as one teacher put it - and reminiscent of an occupational *panopticon* (Foucault 1979) - that held the possibility for personal vindication as well as for professional censure.

These teachers suggested in interview that they had adopted their occupational positions deliberately. Their positions appeared to be partly a personal response to an institutional folk memory which gave meaning to individuals about what inspection was for and what it was like, followed by a resumption of habitual practice in the form of consciously adopted positions that fit in with the occupational parameters within which it is now possible, as I saw it, to operate.

To quote one respondent in the pilot study:

‘There are things you would probably reflect on anyway, when you are in class under normal circumstances’. (Richmond 2003)

However, it is the question relating to what ‘normal circumstances’ can mean - especially when both schools and teachers are under such professional scrutiny and are recipients of so much ‘drip fed’ advice (West 1998) - and it is this question to which I now turn. Indeed, any notion of ‘normal’ might imply a highly limited set of possibilities for the exercise of some professional latitude, and I examine this possibility in what follows.



## Part 3: Methodology

### Overview

Whether called a 'case study' or simply a 'study' of a single school, my intention, here, is to give credence to an approach in which situated interpretative methods provide theoretical insights that warrant consideration as a contribution to our knowledge of how teachers negotiate their roles.

When evaluating this approach for the pilot work, I found empirical relevance in the interpretative paradigm supported by Bassey (1999:51-54) in generating 'fuzzy generalisations' that arise from this type of examination of a 'particularity'; in other words, my school. This form of research suggests that emergent theoretical *propositions* created in this process have something to say about what may apply more widely (*ibid.*, p.55), in and among other schools. This theory-seeking, insider's approach, is given convincing substance, also, by researchers like Woods (1996). He argues for the inherent strength of research from a situated professional context such as mine. This argument for ethno-methodology applied in the researcher's workplace gives rise to the possibility that theory may be derived from data that are *grounded* (Glaser 1967), specifically from within the situation itself.

In support of this epistemological perspective, there is a good deal of support for the methodology adopted for the purpose of this study. The *embeddedness* of the professional perspectives described in the course of talking to colleagues is a benefit noted by Adelman (1980:59) too, who describes work like this as

beginning 'in a world of action' and 'contributing to it'. However, it was vital also to take account of Hammersley's (1992) caution to be aware of adopting, too readily, a convenient and relativistic view of what might be happening in one school setting. In defence of this epistemological position as insider *and* researcher, other ethnographers, for example Kemmis (1980), offer cautious but optimistic support. In a convincing way, Kemmis argues that research of this kind 'will very often affect life in the situation being studied' (*ibid.*, p.120). From my own position, I could see the possibility that these influences might, multifariously, be social, intellectual and professional. It required me to define the parameters of my research endeavour very clearly with colleagues in order to avoid suspicions that it could have had a hidden, spurious agenda in a more cynical way, reflecting a system of power relations and the school's hierarchy. A constant self-awareness of my own position as Assistant Headteacher was critical in maintaining a healthy level of scepticism, especially towards the issue of research validity.

This realisation - again, a point made by Kemmis (1980) in his description of 'the imagination of the case and the invention of the study' - was crucial to the success of this thesis. Related to decisions taken to ensure the successful negotiation of the research process within my own workplace, Kemmis' ideas about the responsibilities of insider researchers to make explicit their own roles and influences in the 'cultural aspects of case study research' (*ibid.*, p.119) did apply both to the pilot research and to this undertaking. Despite this ethical realisation, such transparency was less appropriate through designing the precise format for the final interview: I outline the thinking behind the interview

design below. It became clear as a result of the pilot study that a subtle, or 'oblique', approach for the interviews was called for, one which would solve the problem experienced at first in the reluctance of colleagues to speak openly and without inhibition, which could be related to perceived fears of professional fall-out. After all, colleagues were asked to share some of their perceptions in relation to the school and the quality of education provided, whilst still carrying out tasks directly related both to the last Ofsted inspection in 2001 and in anticipation of the next one. Since this work directly involved me in my activities as Assistant Headteacher, the whole research undertaking (spanning three years) had become a small, but intrinsic, part of the experience for all those involved, including me. Participant researchers cannot become more involved in the field of research than this, and great caution was therefore required in both negotiating its process, and also in reporting its findings. This was vital for the purposes of the Ed.D and in terms of contributing to professional debate and school development, in a genuinely helpful sense. This particular term (i.e. school development) has been appropriated by managerialist discourses in education, suggesting a narrower (and more politically palatable) interpretation of 'development' than this research proposes however (Ball 1992; Dale 1997; Harland 1996). My own position, at the intersection between the research itself and professional activity among my colleagues, more than simply of passing note, brings me next to its concrete professional relevance.

## **Professional Relevance**

Whatever its ultimate purpose, this work was a research undertaking in a real life occupational context. Yin (1994:13), for example, has pointed out that the 'boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident', especially for those trying to investigate their own practice in an empirical manner. Inspection and its consequences, as well as other politically driven initiatives, had already become an interrelated part of the institution's daily life and purpose; a kind of professional *modus vivendi*, which continues to be a reality for its staff.

A similar understanding of the interdependencies that exist in this type of research, and their potential difficulties for the researcher, is recognised by Sturman (1994:61). Also, the highly complex 'intertextual' (or inter-connected) nature of these milieux can usefully be more fully understood from post-structuralist perspectives offered by theorists such as Sarup (1993). The situated and professionally intimate nature of this critical study of the perspectives of colleagues, being integral to the school's professional culture, is though an idea supported by advocates of case study research such as Stake (1995). He styles this approach as 'the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (*ibid*, p.10). Here, the case in question was, ostensibly, an Ofsted inspection, its effect on teaching styles, and the important circumstances in which these teachers found themselves. It emanated from a feeling that teachers need to steer a careful path between external policy pressures for the school to conform along with internal knowledge about what is best for the

children. In the pilot research, this realisation gave credence to a *fuzzy proposition* (Bassey 1999) that inspection *per se* can have a major impact on pedagogy and school development, both over time and in many ways.

Originally, the central question was whether or not teachers had considered possible connections between inspection and routinely practised pedagogy, and if they believed any such connections to be positive or not. As a result, the I.F.S. undertaking had encouraged me to think deeply, critically and sometimes uncomfortably about the nature of pedagogy as enacted within my own professionally relevant context. The earlier research did succeed in eliciting a range of perceptions about the impact of inspection on teachers' daily occupational lives, beyond the inspection event itself. This second phase represents a broader exploration of the professional and institutional effects of mandated policies, as seen through the eyes of practitioners themselves. It is achieved in the form of a more subtle and provisional enquiry into teachers' stories about their purposes, beliefs and enacted practice in the classroom in order to understand what 'makes them tick' professionally, with a new level of insight. This approach is reflected in the choice of research instrument in the form of an 'oblique' interview schedule, as is made clear below. By so doing, I hoped to reclaim some intellectual ground, not just for me but also for my colleagues, to improve our capacities to do our jobs by thinking about, and articulating, what it means to be a teacher now and in the future (Stenhouse 1982:263).

## Research Procedure

From a methodological perspective, this institutional investigation was loosely based on case study principles laid down by a range of researchers: Adelman (1980); Bassey (1999); Cohen (2000); Eisenhardt (1989); Elliot (1991); Hammersley (1992); Kemmis (1980); Lincoln (1985); Lofland (1995); Nisbet (1984); Stake (1995); Stenhouse (1988); Woods (1996); and Yin (1994).

Such an eclectic and, admittedly rather long, list is intended to show how this work has been influenced epistemologically: it has been formulated as a 'study' of one situation, rather than as a 'case study' in any clear-cut, uncomplicated and formulaic sense. The reason for this is discussed below.

The study draws on useful elements of the qualitative paradigms promoted by those academics mentioned above and it does this both in its epistemological recognition of the strengths of the study of singularities (a case) *and* of the potential problems in making generalisable claims about the relationship between one small-scale study and what might be happening elsewhere. Instead, it aims to represent the subtly perceived realism of school life in attempting to understand teachers' own *versions of truth* related to their roles (Hammersley 1992: 70; Coldron and Smith 1999; Convery 1999).

The means of finding out what colleagues really thought about issues relating to pedagogy, school management, performance, standards and being accountable, meant that a sensitive and subtle interview approach was needed if the findings were to be at all authentic. I had refined my own interview

behaviour and interview structure in a series of stages for the pilot research. Lessons learned during this process were put into practice in devising the oblique semi-structured interview schedule for this phase of the study.

To encourage participants in a relevant and fruitful discussion between professional peers, I avoided predetermining a series of over-specific questions. As in the pilot, it seemed sensible to adopt advice given by Mason (1996) about how to create a balance between participants' freedom to shape the discussions while securing co-operation in the research process, by encouraging guided discussion. Mason (1996) also makes the point that genuinely open interviews are social interactions that have to be orchestrated carefully in order to facilitate the free flow of ideas between interviewer and interviewee - if, that is, relevant and 'rich' data are to be collected. This was crucial for me, since I was well known to, and 'knew', the teachers involved, as well as having a position of power in the hierarchical structure of the school. To acknowledge the essentially 'social' and relatively fluid nature of my interview encounters with colleagues was, therefore, a guiding principle in this research:

'The social task in interviews is to orchestrate an interaction which moves easily and painlessly between topics and questions. The intellectual task is to try to assess, on the spot, the relevance of each part of the interaction to your research questions, or to what you really want to know'. (Mason 1999:45)

To summarise, my intention was to foster an open and exploratory discussion (Oppenheim 1992:65) and to avoid precluding avenues of interest suggested by participants, as long as such avenues were relevant to the research focus.

Keeping an eye on what might, indeed, be relevant necessitated an aide-memoir outlining possible topics for discussion. The plan was to avoid a formal interview structure that might limit the willingness of my colleagues to disclose their views.

One concern, especially after experience in the two pilot stages of both group and individual interviews in the I.F.S., was that some issues that I wanted to raise might never have been consciously reflected upon by the participants, themselves, in the first place. Therefore, making conscious use of interview techniques of clarification, re-phrasing and probing would prove necessary to avoid misleading or superficial ideas being offered by the respondents. What I wanted to achieve was to go beyond surface statements in order to represent their views in sufficient detail (Geertz 1973). I settled on a very loosely structured, adaptive approach in the interviews, using oblique questions to probe the ideas that had led to the hypothesis outlined earlier, similarly in the manner to which Lincoln and Guba (1985:269) have argued.

The interview method adopted may be termed *oblique* in that I did not at this stage disclose my overarching research question. Instead, I steered each interview through a series of topic headings and followed the interests of each respondent within those topics, ensuring that as much ground as possible was covered in the space of the hour allotted for each interview (see Appendix 2). The aim, then, was to produce knowledge of the phenomenon that I had speculated as being manifest as a form of professional misrecognition with its impact on pedagogy, from a limited and highly individualised perspective, and



to relate its relevance to thinking about teaching more widely (Burgess 1985; Lincoln 1985).

The interviews were conducted within a situated research position, while looking for authenticity in the disclosures made through the attitudes and views of colleagues, which made deliberate use of my delicate position as insider researcher and colleague (Beynon 1985). This may have been difficult to achieve by means of 'outsider' research involving a third party, since I was able to test the authenticity of at least some of the claims made by respondents based on a long-standing and intimate knowledge of the school (Woods 1996).

Whilst ten interviews were originally planned as being realistic, the number finally undertaken was thirteen, since more colleagues offered to take part than I had expected. This was achieved despite the practical difficulty of tying down busy people and the fact that colleagues had already given their time so generously for both pilot group and single interviews. Asking others proved to be surprisingly difficult, and the notional sixty minutes taken up by each discussion seemed almost too precious to ask for. The thirteen interviewees were mixed in terms of professional status and sex and comprised two headteachers (one from another school), the focus school's deputy headteacher, an ex-colleague deputy head, now working in another school, and others with varying levels of experience and positions in the hierarchy of the focus school. This sample contained eight women and five men. I also tried to avoid attributing greater, or weightier, insight to the views of more experienced colleagues. This meant that less experienced, but no less valuable, views held

by main grade teachers within the school provided a balance in searching for what Eisenhardt (1989:545) describes as cross-case patterns. This search for such patterns in the interview data was also widened by the inclusion of respondents from two schools other than the focus-institution, although they did happen to be ex-colleagues. It was hoped that by taking account of views gained from experience in other institutional contexts, the study could avoid being charged with narrowness, a process that Beynon (1985) found involves a form of 'insider reversion'.

An awareness of this possibility - that rather than simply *go native*, I might already blindly *be native* - was necessary in order to avoid a closed, or a misleading, interpretation of the data. This was achieved by looking for inter-group differences, as well as for similarities, and by stepping outside the focus school, so as not to appear 'incestuous'. The plan was to allow the interviews to go beyond initial impressions in order to gain access to meanings beyond tacit institutional understandings, or 'inescapable frameworks' (Taylor 1989), between colleagues. The purpose of this approach was to lead to an outward-looking conclusion in support of the 'fuzzy proposition' with which the pilot concluded and the clearer hypothesis which this study aimed to resolve.

Each participant was shown the 'Research Protocol' before the interview (see Appendix 1) and all agreed that it was acceptable, including the request that conversations were tape-recorded. After each interview, some full and some partial transcriptions were undertaken. Before beginning this process, however, the tapes were listened to uninterrupted, during which time notes were made

about likely categories for data items. In the event, this process was repeated up to three times, by which stage in each recording nothing new presented itself as a likely data category. The process allowed data to be coded into the seven categories which emerged relevant to the focus of the enquiry, as made clear below. This technique provided a high level of confidence that relevant data were being identified during partial transcription, while extraneous detail could be omitted.

Each interview was transcribed shortly after the event itself and all respondents were given access to read the partial and full transcripts. Each was invited to comment, and data were not used for the analysis until those, who wished to do so, had confirmed that the transcripts were an authentic representation of what had taken place.

The relatively unstructured, free plan for interviews was felt to be wise, based on earlier results in the pilot stages of the research; that some of the topics and issues raised by colleagues in the original interview went beyond what I had expected, and beyond the predicted categories for analysis I had anticipated. This process of grounding the emergent theory in the data had led to genuine enlightenment for me in the pilot study, providing a more sharply focused, but reflexive, interview schedule for the second phase of the pilot, and resulting in the looser interview structure for the purposes of this final phase of the project. I did, of course, formulate a broad set of principal research questions, to encourage colleagues to speak openly, and to ensure good coverage of the topics that I wanted to broach with them.

The ethical dimension to this kind of practitioner research was a potential minefield. The ethical premise upon which the study is based had to be unambiguous and straightforward, with the welfare of colleagues' disclosures of their 'professional life histories' being paramount (Woods 1985). Great caution was exercised, therefore, not to give unsustainable promises about confidentiality once the report was made public (Le Voi 2002). It was important, however, to assure participants that the research and any information or opinions divulged would be used strictly (and only) within the context of the research, and not formally as part of my role in the school as Assistant Headteacher. To expect that cast-iron guarantees of anonymity in such a small-scale study could be made was, frankly, simply ludicrous. In fact, our team of 19 teachers, as well as being well known to each other, are easily identifiable, due to some of the views they held. These views would easily have been attributable once represented in the research. To provide my informants with some measure of discretion, the names of participants were changed and this phase of interviews involved coding the teachers plainly as T1, T2, T3 etc. In the pilot research, this afforded no real anonymity for some (since the Deputy Headteachers were coded as DHT1 and DHT2), which is why the nominal positions of my colleagues in this phase are not disclosed at all in their designation, to afford greater but, I acknowledge not infallible, privacy.

In addition, placing the issues or 'themes' (rather than pseudo-named participants) side-by-side in the final text permitted an increased degree of

privacy for the interviewees, and again, an important ethical consideration in view of the small-scale nature of the study (Cohen, Manion et al. 2000:269).

This kind of approach, in which there is a degree of *overlap* between data collection and the analysis that follows, is supported by advocates of small scale institutional research like Eisenhardt (1989). It was a feature of my work from the outset, consistent with its professional context and the shared experiences of inspection held by the group. The aim was to produce an analysis able to be viewed as *reliable*, consistent with the general (if not absolute) tenets of case study methodology, and *valid* as accounts of the reality of what it is to be a teacher for those interviewed, but within a specific context of place and time.

Above all, it was not the intention to produce an ethnographic 'caricature' or illusion, based on spurious assumptions that may be levelled at one-shot case studies involving interviews with teachers (Convery 1999). This was a worrying possibility for a small-scale, institution-focused project such as this, and is highlighted by other theorists with whom I have adopted a sympathetic methodological approach: e.g. Van Mannen (1979) and Maxwell (1992).

## **Data Categories**

Identified themes during the initial coding process pervading the teachers' conversations were first examined for their relevance to the central enquiry. Next, individual statements were considered for their relevance while keeping the principal research question about 'misrecognition' in mind. There was an inevitable overlap between these artificially demarcated themes, although this structure helped me to introduce an element of comparison between the different perspectives of individuals. The seven broadly defined emergent themes in this second group of interviews were:

- The teacher's sense of vocation: the mantle of the idealised self;
- Working within pedagogic and professional discourses;
- Institutional compliance and the self;
- The reification of 'Good Practice';
- Order versus chaos: finding the right path;
- Professional Trust and Surveillance, or, 'The Gaze of the Other';
- 'Better the devil you know': teachers as psychologically defended subjects.

These seven categories take account of all of the data gleaned from a discussion of key questions with interviewees and provided a sensible means of situating the individual voices of colleagues within relevant ring-fenced concepts (Mishler 1991). Despite the reassuring sense that the pilot research had yielded high quality data, it was only after this initial coding stage for the thesis that the relevance to this enquiry of much of the new material became clear.

These categories now provide the structure for the demarcation, analysis and understanding of the concepts explored in the remainder of this study.

## Part 4: Main Research Activity

### **The teacher's sense of vocation: the mantle of the idealised self**

While I needed to understand more about the factors which determine professional practice at a level which may not have been consciously considered by my colleagues, I was also interested to learn more about their consciously held, or at least *stated*, reasons for wanting to become a teacher.

Since teachers are accustomed to being observed at work and asked about their pedagogical choices by managers, inspectors and advisers, it seemed reasonable to expect that colleagues would present *idealised* or 'fabricated' selves (Maclure 2003:Ch.7) in what, essentially for them, was an interview situation in which they knew they were to be questioned about their professional work. By encouraging interviewees to talk initially from an idealised perspective (based on their initial reasons for wanting to teach), I planned to lead colleagues into a discussion about key issues in a comfortable and unthreatening manner. In spite of their mixed ages, mixed sex and a range of experience from novice to 'vintage' headteacher, there was a surprising congruence of the ideas expressed about wanting to teach; almost all suggested they had an early and conventional sense of vocation, which is often attributed to workers like teachers (Hargreaves 1996). None of these teachers expressed a view that supported the Shavian and popular prejudice that: 'Those who can: do. And those who can't: teach', since all but three colleagues had worked successfully in occupations outside education before making the choice to become teachers. Rather, they seemed to reflect an attitude that working in the 'real world' lacked



both the challenge and satisfaction of engaging with young people in the context of formal schooling:

'I wanted to make a difference to somebody's life. I've come from a retail background where as long as you've got the sales figures, no problem. So if I took a day off it didn't make an awful lot of difference in retail... whereas in teaching it makes a big difference to somebody's life, so I wanted to do something in which I was important to somebody... and after I had my daughter my views on life completely changed. My perspective changed... I wanted to help somebody else, to be of value, whereas retail work was very money-driven and as long as the balance sheet was as big as it could be that's all the company was interested in... One of the most enjoyable things I've seen is seeing one boy going from not being able to speak clearly or read at all to suddenly begin to think for himself, which is just amazing... now he can actually solve a problem'. (T6)

This respondent seemed to manifest an identifiably vocational motive in wanting to teach, and others did so too. Could I take comments such as these at face value though? And, if so, what alternative interpretations of professional self-identity present themselves in these texts which shed light on both a teacher's active location within a professional role and their passive location within discourses or *hegemonic cultures* (Apple 1996), and into which the teacher's very *soul* may have been absorbed (Ball 1999b). That working in the education sector offers a more idealised working environment to those used to the cut-throat nature of the 'real world' is a clear theme running through the respondents' comments. As another colleague, who had worked in finance, remarked:

'[It was]... a job people did in a very selfish way... to get to the top and to get as much money as they could and it really didn't matter who they stepped on to get there... and I just knew it wasn't the right environment for me. I knew I would never be that way and knew that I would stay at the bottom of the pile. I had done a lot of work with children and thought that I obviously like spending time with children. I also wanted to do something where

I felt I was getting something back for all that I gave, and teaching was the obvious thing for me... I knew that I had a bit of understanding of children and that I could do a lot with them, and that it would really help in teaching... It is exactly as I thought it would be... I feel that when I'm teaching I really am making a difference to the children I teach, no two days are the same, no two classes are the same and I just really, really enjoy the fact that I feel I'm doing something worthwhile, but obviously not for the money.' (T8)

This strong sense of vocation, similarly expressed by others, had been maintained in her view, but had she lost any of her idealism along the way? Of course, teachers like any other workers have a variety of reasons for making vocational choices and some of these are based less on emotionally orientated idealism and more on practical considerations. It appeared to be more of a male characteristic, at least among my small sample, to select teaching from a range of realistic career options and, although equally motivated and content as practitioners, the responses of some of my male colleagues suggested a more pragmatic approach to the initial motivation to teach:

'I suppose what led me into teaching was the work I did in secondary school, a sixth form mentoring scheme, working with younger children, assisting them one-to-one with their work. That's where the interest came from because I realised I wasn't actually too bad at it and kind of enjoyed it. Up until that time, all the things I had looked for, at university and college, were business studies and economics and things along those lines. I saw myself as a car salesman! I found I was good at [teaching] and enjoyed it, looked into courses and spent a month as a kind of teaching assistant in my old primary school and, again, I enjoyed the whole ethos of it and the sorts of things you did with the kids... the banter that went on between people. I was included in all of that...and really the interest just sprang from there... I also went off to teacher training college very much with the mind that if I didn't like it, once I got there, I was more than happy to change.' (T7)

The pragmatism attributed to some teachers during their professional trajectories (Moore 2002a) may, in the case of my colleagues, have been

preceded by an earlier set of practical considerations that led some of them into teaching. According to my discussions with colleagues, this did not diminish the sense of vocation and professional purpose with which they characterised themselves, as another teacher suggested when he remarked that he had not initially considered primary teaching, reminding us of prejudices that working with young people is not, perhaps, usually considered as men's work. This notion that '... they did it [became teachers] because they didn't know what else to do at the time' (T11), again, represents a common preconception about teachers and teaching that distinguishes it from other 'professions', such as medicine, engineering or law. All of these usually require prospective workers to make a conscious decision to study industriously and to display academic prowess in the hope that they will achieve the required standards for occupational entry. Teaching, often regarded as lacking the occupational status of the established professions (Gordon 1983; Greenfield 2005a), is, therefore, frequently a second choice for aspiring youngsters or a delayed choice for older and more experienced workers who choose to become teachers for a variety of reasons.

The importance of seeking out my colleagues' consciously held and stated attitudes towards becoming teachers allowed me, through a mutual and shared way of 'joint remembering' (Edwards and Middleton 1986), to construct convincing, but selective, depictions of their professional lives based on a *communal understanding* between us about their actions and locations within our school culture (Bruner 1986). It allowed me to appreciate that these teachers had demonstrated a variety of motivations for entering teaching. It also allowed me to reflect on the importance of avoiding a simplistic or, worse,

an inauthentic account of their spoken words. What did emerge was that these teachers were not a group of open-mouthed 'nodding donkeys', either naively accepting governmental policy as novices on the one hand, or responding conservatively to systemic demands, as experienced old troupers, on the other, as the quote below suggests. They did not simply recall the systemic mantras implied by so much recent reform and prescription in education, such as those described ideologically by Bourdieu (1976), in polemically performative terms by Ball (1992), in a managerialist manner as suggested by Dale (1997) or from within the gift of self-evaluation, as argued by Macbeath (1999). Nor did those interviewed straightforwardly reflect the professional 'positionings' described in taxonomies of teacher identity suggested by those like Moore (2002a). Rather, the teachers interviewed for this research expressed a range of vocational identities, not tied conveniently to initial motivations of altruism through public service or self-preserving practicality, but based more on social and spiritual experiences unique to each individual:

'In terms of what I've most enjoyed, I think it's the interaction with other staff as well, you know, the atmosphere within the school is a big plus, a big bonus. I know some teachers have different opinions according to where they work, and what the school situation is like, but I think that's a big bonus from the point of view that I was lucky to land up in a school like this, where starting off as an NQT there was the encouragement to develop as an individual.' (T4)

This teacher still saw being an individual, with a personal voice in a systematised occupational world, as a possibility through his positive recollections of his early days as a teacher by acknowledging the importance, for him, of the micro-cultural or social circle among colleagues. However, this does seem to contradict, for example, Ball's (1987) belief that teachers' careers

are highly controlled by organisational structures and the micro-political elements within institutions like schools. Such an interpretation, then, should be treated cautiously if the earlier point about not simply accepting teachers' comments at face value is borne in mind (Convery 1999). Moreover, most of Ball's research is based in secondary schools, which may also explain some differences. Still, in this particular setting, I have certainly witnessed the professional marginalisation of individuals who did not share institutional aims or who fell foul of the micro-political culture of the school. There was, though, a powerful 'collegial' sense of loyalty to the school's culture, which was a feature of most respondents' comments:

'It's something I've always wanted to do and I didn't consider many other possibilities. I went straight from sixth form at school, to college and into teaching... I've really enjoyed working here as part of a team and everybody has been very welcoming and friendly, you know, really nice to work with. I've had a really lovely class to work with, too, and I've really enjoyed teaching them. I like the variety. There are no two days ever the same...It's sometimes hard to know when to stop, you know, you feel like you could keep going and, um, I do feel that anything I've found difficult I've been supported with, you know... issues in the classroom, so I feel I've been supported in anything like that'.

**(T10)**

If this teacher's stated satisfaction with her classroom role did not simply reflect diplomacy in interview, it did seem to indicate a pleasant working atmosphere, from her perspective at least. She said she felt this way despite talking about the obvious demands of a job in which it was *sometimes hard to know when to stop*. Since the kind of task intensification often associated with teaching is both compelling and compulsory (Taylor 1989), this teacher, like her colleague, seemed to suggest that she could preserve a strong sense of 'self' (Nias 1984) whilst responding to institutional demands emanating from

school management and which, in turn, were a personal response to wider political imperatives:

'I've found there are lots of forms to fill in. Every time you go to your pigeon hole there's a different survey or something, the GTC or the LEA or NQT things or whatever... you know lots of forms and things, but other than that really there's nothing'. (T10)

The point here is that my interviews threw up a subtle series of meanings relating to the individual working within institutional power to which they were subjected. What colleagues actually *said* in all of these encounters makes problematic an extreme or polemicised explanation of the intensification of teachers' work, argued for example by Ball (1992), in which the teacher's very *soul* is a site of occupational *struggle* (Ball 1999b). It also makes it difficult in this context for me to adopt too readily an overly pejorative, or distilled, interpretation of power under which the teacher's experience is essentially as power/less dupe enslaved to the system, as indicated by an over-simplified application to this group of teachers of Ball's (1992) arguments, or in Lukes' (1974) atomised models of power, or in the description of hegemonic power given by Gramsci (1971). Instead, not only did my colleagues seem to be able to cope with the occupational demands that essentially sprang from power exerted *over* them; they also conceived of themselves as vocationally aware workers whose personalities had entered into a certain amount of reciprocity - or through a capillary action - with those demands. This kind of power is described compellingly by Fairclough (1995:129):

'[P]ower is predominantly exercised through the generation of consent rather than through coercion, through ideology rather than through physical force, through the inculcation of self-disciplining practices rather than through the breaking of skulls'.

As another teacher remarked when asked why he responded as he did to bureaucratic demands in school:

'I can see the value in it. I can see that if I didn't keep assessment records I wouldn't have a clue what the kids were doing, um, I don't do it because I have to do it, I do it because I can see the value in it, so I force myself to do it... I think you could probably get away without doing it. You could blag it, yeah, I don't know anyone in school who does but I'm sure if you wanted to I don't think you would be caught out, no'. (T11)

This teacher's comment reflected his conscious *self-positioning*: he was no slave to the system, he felt. However, my own insider knowledge of the school's procedures, and the relative transparency of many of the bureaucratic tasks indicates that this is a kind of professional bravado, rather than a straightforward, real example of total self-determination in the teacher's work. Instead, this teacher demonstrated a conscious awareness of the structures into which he and his colleagues had to fit, with some scope for individual volition perhaps, in a manner that responds to power acting in a multi-directional and capillary manner:

'There are disjunctures at this stage between ideals and practice, expectations and actuality, requirements of the role and personal predilections, capacity (of knowledge, skills and workload) and demands'. (Measor, Sikes et al., 1985:3)

This explanation of the complex inter-relationship between the teacher and the school's frameworks, in which power is real yet in a state of constant flux,

resonates with Giddens' (1991) postmodernist conceptualisations of the place of 'self' in cultural and micro-political contexts such as the school:

'The self, like the broader institutional contexts in which it exists, has to be reflexively made. Yet this task has to be accomplished amid a diversity of options and possibilities... In the post-traditional order of modernity, and against the backdrop of new forms of mediated experience, self-identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour. The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems'. (*ibid.*, pp.3-5)

Teacher 11 was being reflexive – in the sense that Barnett (1997) implies - and intelligent about what influenced his practice in school, while he seemed to mediate his experience through a discourse of educational 'value'. However, this analysis needs to move beyond taken-for-granted, decontextualised, and naive readings of the told story or text; there is a need, now, 'to go beyond the defended discourse of the told story of [the] informant... to put that self-presentation in the context of other knowledge' (Wengraf, cited in Chamberlayne 2000:145). The teacher (T11) quoted above expressed support for the systems in place in schools that corresponded to his own consciously stated values. Despite being clearly imbued with the values of the institution through his immersion in the prevailing culture of the school, he still adopted a genuinely *reflective* stance - in the manner meant by Schon (1978) - in relation to what he did *in action*, yet followed suit with an understanding of corporate thinking, expressed in official school policies:

'Some things are going to work for me and some things I change a bit, and for me it was more the basis of what's expected by the school... from that I've evolved my own practice, not radically different from the school's, but just what I feel works for me... The



school's expectations are important because generally there are very high expectations from the management and also from other teachers about what everybody does, and I think everyone has high expectations of themselves, as to what they do. So I look at it from the point of view of a school with high expectations. If I was in a school that was more lax then I might find myself being a lot more lax in my teaching as well. But because those expectations are there, and people look up to them, when new people join the staff they live up to those expectations as well, because if you weren't living up to them people would let you know pretty quickly.' (T11)

Quite clearly, this view - in common with the other teachers interviewed - gives justification to the suggestion that teachers do not simply, and naively, become transmitters of the ideological discourses within which they find themselves located. Their 'positionings' are, indeed, much more complex, multifaceted, held consciously as well as subliminally, and indicate that they can inhabit multiple sites of occupational identity (Moore 2004). They do this, it has been argued, while developing a powerful set of strategies with which to cope under the pressure of multiple demands (Pollard 1982). Whilst not doubting the vocational sincerity of colleagues, the realisation that the *dark side of the moon* of professional consciousness among teachers may not be a single *place* in their identities makes understanding what lies beneath the text of their spoken words in interview all the more challenging to decipher, especially from among such vocationally inspired colleagues:

'Both my parents were teachers so there was that family history, although I am the only one out of all of my brothers, it was just a natural progression. I did youth work and before I did that I had applied to do teacher training, so I don't know what made me make the choice to become a teacher. Obviously, I'm of the faith and I do believe very much that I was guided, but that's all I can say'. (T13)

'I can relate back to my own experiences and I think that primary school is the basis for everything else that you'd want to learn for the future. For me, they were the most important years.' (T5)

If these teachers were somehow able to negotiate a delicate path in their professional trajectories, if they were *guided* either emotionally from within, or even spiritually, as claimed by some of my colleagues, then how did they reconcile facets of the individualism they all expressed with working according to given pedagogic and professional discourses? More importantly in the context of this study, to what extent were the teachers aware of these professional locations or how occluded were their perspectives?

### **Working within pedagogic and professional discourses**

The very term 'discourse' is ubiquitous in academic debates surrounding educational issues (see page 60 below). Like other terms used as brief synonyms for complex and controversial concepts, I want to be clear about what I mean by teachers working within such discourses. As a practitioner, I am subject to the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and its attendant expectations, such as compulsory testing at the end of each Key Stage. As well as meeting statutory requirements, I work as part of a system of thought which, loosely, is often reified and called 'good practice' in teaching - or in thinking about teaching and learning (Elbaz 1983) - ideas that are in vogue, popular and subscribed to by schools (Schon 1978; Bennett 1995). I also work as an individual, yet essentially compliant, member of a single institution: the school with its own culture and 'lifeworld' (Ball and Bowe 1992) under the direction of a headteacher who possesses considerable autonomy to

determine its fortunes (Moore 2002b) and carries, implicitly in this role, a strong identity even of domination (Southworth 1995:218). Each school will vary in its precise enactments of mandated and fashionable policies, within the parameters of what is possible, and each school will have its unique variation on the official line of the *grand narrative* of national educational policy which allows for individual preferences and the scope for certain freedoms, or *connoisseurship*, in education (Eisner 1985).

This research is crucially concerned with understanding more about the scope for teachers to think critically about their practices within given discourses in education. In order, ultimately, for them to be able to make informed judgements about their own impact and effectiveness, if they are to reclaim some intellectual ground in the professional enterprise, they need to understand and engage with the nature of these discourses themselves. As I explain below, a simple, monolithic definition of the term 'discourse', within which teachers are both consciously and unwittingly located, is insufficient though. Where power, ideology and degrees of volition were wrapped up in ring-fenced concepts or discourses, the teachers' positionings translated into the complex individual stories, full of stated self-belief, and offered by the interviewees. So, the term 'discourse' in the context of this study in part describes the sources of the knotty, complicated and sometimes contradictory ideas expressed by teachers in interview, who, in turn, expressed interpretations of various discourses as professional 'conceptions'. As Billig et al. (1988:46) have suggested:

'[T]eachers' ideological *conceptions* tend not to be so neatly packaged and consistent as those posited... [T]eachers may

well hold views of teaching, of children, of the goals of educational practice and the explanation of educational failure, which theorists of ideology would locate in opposed camps. Further, it is not unknown for teachers to be aware of such contradictions, to feel themselves involved in difficult choices and as having to make compromises.' (my emphasis)

Running throughout the data is a pattern among teachers of compromise and some awareness of ideological contradictions in what they are expected, but would sometimes prefer not to have, to do. On the other hand, the prevailing educational discourse within which they work - one based on managerialist logic and enterprise (Whitty 1997) as well as pupil performance and institutional goal governed forms of performativity (Dale 1997) - finds its grassroots resolution in Fairclough's (1995:219) '*inculcation of self-disciplining practices*' among teachers. It does so whether these teachers are fully aware of the extent to which their beliefs and attitudes are chosen from a restricted and intellectually prescribed selection or not. One teacher explained the need for professional 'guidance' and a wish for cohesion, to unify 'disjointed thinking' into a pedagogical structure that is intelligible to practitioners. The desire for a single pedagogical order, as opposed to pedagogical pluralism, is another theme that ran through all of the interviews, and finding the right path between such opposing positions was a major preoccupation among colleagues. As one respondent expressed it:

'I don't necessarily see the National Primary Strategy as something just pulled together. It's bringing together disjointed thinking... it's about bringing that together and leading learning together but also varying strategies for learning styles... bringing it all together so that it's consistent... I believe we need guidance. We need guidance, um, I am not a doctor or professor of education, so I am willing to listen and I'm open to other ideas about how to find the best way that children learn. For example, five years ago I would never have thought about brain gym and

now I am and that's come from a higher body. I believe we have to be open to new ideas and more often and not it's reinventing the wheel, it's a cycle of progress and each time we go back to an old system, reworking it and adding our children's needs into that and even though it's the same as we did 20 years ago we've got the common practice or modern practice to tie in with that. I think it's essential that we look at all of these ideas, take them on board'. (T13)

The amorphous and transitory nature of some discourses in education, the possibility for contradiction and dissonance and layered levels over which teachers and schools have some control, lead us to a more far-reaching meaning of *discourse*. In effect, my colleagues seem to substantiate the suggestion that they, in part, help to create predominant discourses, not simply by replicating them, but actively shaping and re-shaping them, always within certain limits however. Ball's (1990) definition of discourse is useful for my purposes here:

'Discourses... are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody meanings and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations... Meanings thus arise not from language, but from institutional practices, from power relations, from social position' (pp.17-18)

Whilst helpful in explaining the significance of the institutional culture among its workers as the locus of a shared discourse which emanated from within - as well as from outside - the school, patterns in the data collected do indicate that such discourses are in fact partly constructed through the language these teachers used to explain their ideas. This facet of the research is examined later. A major strength of researching one's own professional domain lies in the ability to be able to understand the multi-level and osmotic interplay between educational grand narratives and the lived micro-political reality of

discursive practice (Beynon 1985), by being able to correlate what is said by participants with a detailed knowledge of policies and the history of the school in its wider context. The recognition of the uniqueness of each individual and a plethora of individual perspectives among colleagues makes nonsense of reducing the richness of their positions to a straightforward, if convenient, typology of teachers in this school. Indeed, since the socio-cultural motivations of colleagues are as crucial to gaining an insight into possibilities for misrecognition as their declared professional perspectives, I want to acknowledge this complexity in what I set out to achieve by relating it to Foucault's (1979: 217) suggestion that:

'[T]he individual is thus fabricated into the social order. People are woven into and woven out of discourse'.

For some of my colleagues, the way in which professional activities in relation to organising pupils' learning were carried out relied on a tacit and transmitted series of *systems* in the school. These systems, it was assumed by colleagues, were underwritten by official school policies and determined at the level of the institution, rather than reflecting educational grand narratives providing the broad frameworks, or ideological *systems* of pedagogy (Bourdieu 1976) within which teachers might unwittingly work. Such frameworks, if an awareness of them was displayed at all by these teachers, are tacitly enacted. An understanding of individual practice is derived from institutional expectations, here, more than from within transparent wider pedagogical discourses:

'Our approach, I suppose, has come from all sorts of areas. I mean our system of recording and keeping records is quite good. The paperwork is quite minimal and therefore it's easier in that sense. Some schools, the last school I was in for instance, their recording for each child was very different. We have students

coming in and their record keeping of children is very different. They have a record of every single child and every single lesson they do, they have to record whether they've met, achieved or not achieved the objective. In that respect it is much easier, our system.' (T1)

Here, it could be said that teaching is less artistry and charisma, in the way that either Woods (1996) has suggested or Moore (2004) has identified as one of the fundamental characteristics of one style of teacher, but instead increasingly a bureaucratic function based on a form of *management rationality* (Wilcox 1996:132). Here, too, we have the teacher vocalising an example of Foucault's (1979) *moral technologies* in practice. As this same teacher admitted, by describing her work in what she saw as self-aware and instrumentalist terms, there are powerful forces in teaching with which an individual must contend:

T1: It's a part of what the government wants of each child isn't it?

Int: Is it? What do you mean by what the government wants?

T1: As part of the school knowing how individual children have developed through the year, through the years.

While all of those interviewed implied that they were fully committed to the 'development' of children in the broadest sense, all did so based on assumptions that learning itself was a process which follows a linear or step-by-step path, along which the teacher is the instrument of guidance and support. While teachers often expressed childhood learning in such conventionally Piagetian terms, this was hardly surprising in view of the pre-eminence of these earlier psychologically derived theories and the hierarchical manner in which the National Curriculum is organised (or 'levelled'). However,

the conceptualisation of learning based so exclusively on what one teacher (T13) described as 'incremental learning', completely bereft of any reference to later theories which focus on the socio-cultural dimensions and significance of learning primarily as a contextualised and social experience, surprised me (Bruner 1986). Several of my colleagues placed children's learning squarely in the predominant pedagogical discourse implied by the way the curriculum is now configured. They seemed to offer no alternative models, talking much of 'levels', the importance of 'knowing where children are at' and 'pushing them on', presumably to higher levels of cognitive development. That this happened, they implied, depended on the teacher's ability to keep progress moving at a pace appropriate to children's chronological position in this process. This approach, one teacher argued, leads to a process of:

'[E]ffective learning... and then from that we'll set up [assessment] folders for each class with the results from previous years and at key stage meetings we can have a look at the results to see where we are, where each class is at, where they need to go, to highlight children who are not doing well or who maybe have stayed on the same grade over the last few years... basically for teachers to question themselves and to have a clear overview of where their classes are and where they need to go, what steps they need to take the children forward within those groups to give them a clear vision of children with lower ability and the more able children as well'. (T5)

Couched within this stated discourse of a caring and dialogical pedagogy, which my knowledge of individuals indicates was sincerely felt, is the prevailing and arguably hidden ideological discourse with which these teachers were subconsciously imbued. It represents a complex discourse of professional accountability; one that is target-orientated and institutionally competitive. These views are more subtle, perhaps, than can be accounted for through polemical theories about the marketisation of education, versus its



liberalisation. Dale (1997:279) provides a useful commentary on the effects of what ostensibly appears to give scope for individual volition within the education system:

‘These strategies seem designed to limit the influence of teachers over education, atomising the system by decentralisation, introducing tighter controls over curriculum and assessment, and limiting the scope for the political discussion of education.’

The intensification of bureaucratic tasks for teachers in recent years, and clearly recognised here by my own colleagues, appears to have played its part in limiting their scope to think circumspectly about their purposes and the agency that determines professional practices. It is a facet of their behaviour that I portray throughout this study as *professional misrecognition among teachers*, since conscious consideration of a teacher’s professional role is now so ‘atomised’ through governmental decentralisation (*ibid.*, p.279), that it arguably becomes difficult to see the political ‘wood’ through ideologically positioned ‘trees’. This remains a possibility for me, too, as researcher working in the field being studied, and is reflected in the cautious nature of my arguments. As a result, one of these teachers interviewed expressed a feeling of personal fragmentation and the potential for curricular chaos, or ‘bitty-ness’, as a source of anxiety for her:

T3: I don’t like the bitty way of having to work where you have to do this one week and that next week, you know, it’s not a flow. I find that sometimes, anyway.

Int: What do you think that ‘bitty-ness’ is due to, why does that happen more nowadays?

T3: It is different expectations I think. I mean we used to do the same work, we did achieve the same results if not better, you know, but it’s just the pressure of everything else now.

This teacher regarded the role of subject co-ordinator as key to bringing some coherence and consistency to her work. The prevailing discourse based on an 'incremental' model (T13) of progress through the primary years seems to suggest that she sees a narrow professional path as the means of leading, and being led by, teaching colleagues in school. Her use of figurative language to describe her thoughts is interesting in this context, not simply because it resonates with a view of control in schools which does not see power as purely 'monolithic' or bureaucratically pyramidal (Harland 1996:100). Neither does her expression merely signify its relevance to this single school context because it is echoed in Giddens' (1991) view that the complex nature of professional roles in a post modern, 'atomised', reality means that decisions or 'fateful moments' carry the potential for a dangerous deviation from prescribed ideological pathways leading to chaos - another common theme explored in the interview data (*ibid.*, pp.113-114). This has significance here because it reflects both the eclecticism and the conventionality of having to work within a multitude of different influences and demands; these teachers would be posited by Britzman (1998) as *fragmented selves* and by Moore et al. (2002a) as *contingent pragmatists*:

'As a co-ordinator you have to bring everybody along a certain path and in that way you have to be familiar with the things that need to be done and see aspects that aren't being done and try to pull things together a bit. I think we have to do this because we're answerable to a lot of people, governors, head, deputy head... because you see the deputy saying this is the position we're in now and these are the things that need to be done, you know that sort of conversation, so it's the people we have to really see and, um, agree with. Does that make sense?' (T3)

This teacher's compliant, yet eclectic, response to external demands represents Britzman's (1998) *cacophony of calls* to which she, like others, felt

compelled to respond. It appears that she worked within a range of professional discourses, not discourses that she (T3) consciously articulated in interview, but responding as a matter of professional survival and, thereby, reflecting the existence of such multiple discourses. Her comments were echoed by others:

‘It is that sort of system set in place and it’s a sort of a hidden one, it’s not written down anywhere that it says we have to do it, but it’s just an expectation and I know the SATs weren’t particularly good in Year 2 and that seemed to snowball everybody, even though we weren’t in Year 2. We reacted in all the other years’. (T3)

One teacher even reflected consciously on how *subconscious* his pedagogical thinking had become, working as he did within a powerful educational discourse:

‘I don’t ever think explicitly any more of the good aspects of when you’re actually teaching children, when you see the penny drop. I don’t think I ever explicitly think that anymore. I remember a few times earlier on when it happened and I felt I’d achieved something. I think I take that now as commonplace, as a natural part of the job and I don’t think I personally celebrate what I’ve done with individuals; I just take it as a part of everyday teaching... That’s there inside somewhere but it’s not something I explicitly think about’. (T7)

When asked to talk about their educational beliefs in broader terms, several teachers became vague or reverted to discussing practice in the classroom in policy terms:

‘Obviously, when the children do well and you can see that they’ve achieved something. That’s what it’s all about really and...I think actually having the setting in Year 2 we do it slightly differently because of the staffing and what we’re actually trying to achieve in those lessons as well. I think there’s a lot to get used to in it. We go through the three-part lesson and things like that but not necessarily with phonics every lesson and I’d normally spend a whole lesson every week on phonics rather

than do a bit each day, although the strategy says you should start every lesson with phonics and then move on... I think it's because that's the way it was done before I arrived and secondly when we have the setting teacher we spend time on doing sentence level for setting and then we do longer writing tasks and shared reading, but we split them up so there's a progression through the week. Do you see what I mean?' (T10)

This teacher discussed her pragmatic adoption of both 'the strategy' and the existent arrangements made by her predecessor. In doing so, she arguably displayed an essentially technicist approach derived from her recent training. She talked about learning mainly in technical terms based on prescribed teaching strategies in a naturalistic way, in a sense that calls to mind Bourdieu's (1976) ideas about influence of symbolic 'systems of thought' into which we are 'born' and in relation to which we, as teachers, appear to become *naturalised*. Her pedagogical approaches seemed to be limited to a combination of received wisdom from training experiences and the class teachers with whom she worked. Thus, any critical quality in evaluating the value of these approaches is relegated to considering 'what works really well' rather than 'why' it might work well as a strategy for teaching children. It suggests teaching as an essentially instrumentalist activity that is dependent on the teacher seeing herself being a '*bearer of knowledge*' (Britzman 1991:87), somehow transferring this to children through classroom activities and approaches, and a paradigm into which the teacher is absorbed or *colonised*.

'In Habermasian terms this can be understood as strategic action colonising *the communicative structures* of the teachers' life world, whereas, from a Foucauldian perspective, *management is about the subjugation of bodies*; it is essentially a "disciplinary power".' (Wilcox1996:132, my emphasis)

If we adopt this view of the teacher's pedagogical role - in other words, that her professional world was controlled through self-regulation as well as through externally determined management policies (including external evaluation by Ofsted) - then there may be no room for Woods' (1996) 'art' of teaching, which valorises the importance of individuals over systemic controls. Neither did my colleagues introduce notions like Stenhouse's (1975) concept of the 'teacher as researcher', or Elliot's (1991) more practice-based notions that authentic professional work among teachers can emanate partly from a commitment to Action Research in the classroom.

Even the school's headteacher (whose views can hardly be made anonymous here) adopted a philosophical rejection of the scope for individuality and flair in teaching, since, he argued, it led in the past either to some teachers becoming self-reverential or allowed for too much variance in the quality of teachers to impart the curriculum, such as may have been the case before the 1988 Education Reform Act:

'Going back thirty years there was a tacit assumption that everybody knew what being educated was. Looking back on it, I was teaching at the time, I think it was complete rubbish; you were never told what a child should be learning, I just used my common sense... based on my experiences as a youngster... you had a sort of instinct about what learning or knowledge was. I think it was a bad mistake that the teaching profession itself had not taken that on board earlier in the '60s when the rumblings started about what is going on in education, the teaching profession could have got together to produce a curriculum, but they didn't, it was done for us and we didn't like it... It seems to me that a teacher going into the classroom nowadays has some idea objectively about what being educated is, rather than some sort of subjective, well, we think we know... I think those people who criticised the education process in the '60s have some right on their side... [It] certainly was the case that teachers were going into the classroom without a clue and you had to fly by the seat of

your pants... there was no benchmark, no guide, no testing, no assessment, no planning'. **(T2)**

This respondent's rejection of what he regarded as the professional latitude available to teachers in a previous era might itself have been based on a discourse related to educational liberalism and early post-modern ideology (Green 1975). His perspective could be related to his role as headteacher from within a highly prescriptive management rationality: he had to direct the work of his teachers, to secure institutional aims and to fend off potential criticism from the outside, with its emphasis on accountability, quality assurance and nationally aggregated 'standards' (Eraut 1992).

This interesting perspective of teacher-turned-manager in the context of the school is highlighted by another senior colleague, who consciously reflected on his own change in focus from the local (within a single class setting as teacher) to the institutional, with all of its attendant responsibilities:

The job has changed for me so much from being a class teacher to being a deputy, after having been an acting head elsewhere, all very, very different jobs. As a consequence I couldn't lump it all together. As a class teacher it was my work with children, it was about developing a positive relationship with children and parents, getting to know the children intimately, getting to know their learning habits, having a laugh and a joke with children and moving them forward, making sure they were positive children and building them up as best I can. As a manager I have really enjoyed co-ordinating and managing people, being the person with a lot of knowledge, having oversight; have thoroughly enjoyed that. Being an acting head, although I enjoyed it in terms of the extension of the management role, having the oversight and a feeling of pride that it was my school, walking through the gates and looking up at the school every morning, that sense of pride was just amazing... and knowing the changes I was implementing over all of the children, not just in one class, that was a tremendous feeling. However, when it came to staffing issues then there are parts I didn't enjoy.' **(T13)**

This teacher's philosophy of learning and school management could be viewed as paternalistic, authoritarian and based on management rationality. He appeared to be vocationally driven, committed, enthusiastic and experienced, but his ways of talking about these things also indicated that he saw himself as a teacher who imparted knowledge in an unreciprocated manner as a guardian of children's development. This was transferred into his management style, wanting 'oversight', and bestowing a magnanimous but watchful kind of paternalism on the whole school community of staff and pupils. This management style complements the rationalised model of school performativity now in vogue in this country and may be applied to discourses of school effectiveness with a measurable and isomorphic universality (Morley 2000). As another teacher remarked:

'I like the fact that I can look back and see that a child got to such and such a level last year or how much they've improved this year, you know? It is good to be able to make those comparisons but at the same time within each band you have a wide range of marks, so between a Level 3A and 3B, there's ten marks so technically you're not showing anything, to show progression, but you are, they're still a 3A'. **(T12)**

This preoccupation with levels of attainment based on a particular model of children's learning, as being strictly hierarchical and incremental, ran through the interviews when teachers were asked about their attitudes towards 'standards' and children's progress in relation to them. One teacher was concerned with 'How much the children have retained' (T6) as a result of her intervention. Again, such comments resonate with Britzman's (1991) conception of teachers primarily as guardians of legitimised knowledge which is 'fed' to children through a mandatory and ideologically-derived curriculum. However,

these teachers did not profess their beliefs about how children learn in conveniently polemical terms; instead they were couched in more humanistic terms that still permitted at least a semblance of volition during the classroom encounter between teacher and pupils:

'I hope that my own experiences and from university help me to put that forward to the children in a way that they would understand, so making it more fun for them, or making things interactive for them to learn from and, with some groups, kinaesthetic learning; I'd like to try out more of that if I can. For example, with measuring in maths, getting water jugs out and actually physically measuring and going out with a ruler and measuring real objects rather than just looking at a textbook and answering questions from it... I feel they'll remember more if they've actually done something... I know I do...not just one style of learning but trying to use different approaches for different children, so one day when we do handwriting for example we'll have quiet music on in the background so that children who work well with music can reflect and calmly do their handwriting. Another day, we'll have a practical approach to cater for the different learning styles in the classroom'. (T6)

These revealing comments suggest that this teacher perceived considerable professional latitude to employ the teaching methods she felt worked best in different situations. Her ideas are not at all radical, indeed they could now be said to be 'mainstream', but she presented them as a cohesive pedagogical approach, derived partly from her initial training and partly from a kind of vocational voice from within her 'self'. However, her comments and ideas were consistent with the school's policies on teaching and learning in mathematics and, reflected in turn, the Piagetian principles upon which such policies are probably based. She worked within a prescribed educational discourse permitted at policy level in the school since the policy itself was sanctioned by wider discourses relating to what it meant to be an effective or 'good teacher'



(Moore 2004). Again, there may be nothing inherently wrong with this stance, but it seems that what passes for individual thinking is structured by a mantle of ideologically available and limited choices about what constitutes effective teaching and learning. All of those interviewed professed different styles and preferences in the way they liked to teach although, when examined closely, their comments suggested that if learning is to take place teaching is essentially an active process of engagement with children, with its attendant requirements for 'control' in the classroom. Learning becomes an essentially passive activity involving intellectual absorption by children, as opposed to being an act of intellectual reciprocity. Teaching is thus seen as a fundamentally therapeutic or even remedial pursuit to which the child is subjected as a kind of treatment, and this could be looked upon as a deficit model of childhood learning. As expected, none of my colleagues spoke in these terms, but the remarkable correspondence between what they implied in their anecdotal comments revealed the degree to which their thinking was steered along classically conservative and formalised lines. This formed the educational discourse within which they were allowed to manoeuvre:

'With one particularly *troublesome, easily distracted* and rude group, I really feel that I turned it around, made them feel that they could achieve something, *even at their level* there was a lot to enjoy in learning... children in that maths group who started *listening* more and started producing the work much more and being... *much more on task* in their lessons... I think I have quite high *standards*. I always expect an awful lot from the children but in my view by expecting so, so much, *their own standards* will rise. Providing I never make them feel that my standards are impossible to meet, I'm never going to be as good as miss wants me to be, then I think maybe it's a good thing. Now, what I mean by standards is that when children are working, I think they should work in silence, quietly, and the reason for that is because I think in order for them to concentrate properly they need to be able to focus on it wholly. Maybe that's just because it's the way I work best... but I think an awful lot of the children like it that way

and in fairness to them I expect the whole class to work in the quiet for that reason'. (T8, my emphasis)

Her assertive attitude and clear-cut sense of effective pedagogy, based both on her own personal preferences and a pragmatic approach which was intelligent and self-critical, did though ask for compliance that did not always sit comfortably with her own, *felt* ideas about how and what she should have been teaching. She continued:

'In terms of music, it is important to give them the opportunity to listen to different musical pieces to gain some understanding of where the composer was coming from when he was writing it and what skills he was using.... so *I do feel guilty* knowing those things are important but at the same time, in my classroom practice, *I know I'm very conscious of the fact that it's more important for them in this day and age to be good at English, maths and science- and ICT as well....* because that is life, not just because of the tests, obviously that is important as well... and you are very aware of those tests in May and you are very aware that you need to make sure the children are at *the expected standard*, otherwise it *doesn't look good for the school....* so there is the test, but for life in general, whatever they choose to do, they have to be good at English and maths... but definitely English and maths... no-one will accept you for anything... if you have not got all the skills you need for maths and English'. (T8, my emphasis)

As well as indicating this teacher's underlying beliefs that her job as 'educator' was to equip children with the skills and knowledge that will ultimately give them currency in the world of work (not an uncommon view), there was clearly a rift in her thinking. It seemed to be located between these demands and her feeling that teaching children involves a wider range of skills, experiences and attitudes than simply giving precedence to the current common preoccupation with 'literacy' and 'numeracy'. Thinking aloud in interview about the effect of a disparate *cacophony of calls* (Britzman 1998) might, perhaps, have caused this

teacher to think more consciously about pedagogical discourses, involving familiar 'back-to-basics' rhetoric, within which she was mandated to work.

Although some of my colleagues articulated strong and, ostensibly, transparent pedagogical beliefs when asked about their educational values, most felt compelled to talk about the competing demands on their professional inclinations to work within curricular and pedagogical discourses that, in effect, are fully and expressly mandated:

'I have thought, when I've wanted to question something in a policy or the National Curriculum... I have thought, well, this is just someone else's idea on what should be done and I should give it due thought... [It] doesn't necessarily mean it is 100% the one and only way to do things, but at the same time you can't do that too much because you'd be going over on your own: left, right and centre... *you have to keep within what's there*'. (T8, my emphasis)

Another teacher remarked:

'I don't really like standing in front and talking, I don't really like having children sitting down with their heads down in books. I like practical work, my favourite bit. Otherwise I'm not sure they are really learning anything. They are listening, they are hearing, they can repeat what they've heard but whether or not it actually means anything to them, I very much doubt and unless you are just wanting them to remember facts, that's not my way. In primary teaching you are aiming to show them how to learn, to show them ways of learning, ways of remembering. So being able to remember a whole stack of facts is good. I mean it has to be done. They have to learn things by rote. That will help them. You need to have quick recall of facts but to me it's all about knowing something and keeping it in'. (T9)

Considering ambivalent attitudes towards the enacted curriculum like these together indicates that the teachers worked within mandated discourses - both knowingly and complicitly - yet with a sense of personal conviction, based on self-belief and a sense of vocation. How far these powerfully expressed self-

beliefs were based on deeper professional thinking or received wisdom is questionable. One of those interviewed (T13) suggested that the role of teacher is essentially a vocational and personally created one: the charismatic teacher expressing his motivations in terms of 'excellence' and performativity as well. These motivations were mingled with a concern for maintaining 'control' while articulating a professed commitment to treating children on an individual level.

The self-conscious statement by a teacher which follows, related to an awareness that he had contradicted himself in interview, also highlights the tensions some of these teachers felt in reconciling their roles, both institutionally and as individuals, with a sense of vocation that had the potential to transcend systemic demands:

'For me it's all about the enjoyment of learning... I thoroughly believe that if you can get a child engaged... through humour, through whatever means... I'm going to contradict myself here because it is about excellence in learning if you can get them engaged and enjoying what they are doing then they'll succeed in my view... They may not succeed academically and progress as well... in formal lessons but they do succeed by becoming more confident children and once we have that confidence we can then build on other skills. So really it has to be a relaxed, enjoyable classroom, albeit within the boundaries of strong discipline and children have to know those boundaries, so for me it's about having that, having children appreciate who you are as a person in terms of having a laugh with them but as soon as you say no, now it's time to stop playing, knowing that difference yeah? So it's having a relaxed, enjoyable classroom environment in which they can build their confidence to learn.' (T13)

There are some interesting ideas in these comments about learning as primarily both a psychologically and a socially configured experience,

although there may be some dissonance in the possible tension between 'enjoyment' and 'discipline' described here: Whose enjoyment? Whose rules and boundaries? This appears to be an example of how somebody who presented himself fundamentally as a *charismatic teacher* (Moore 2004) dealt with the contradictions between preferences of style, while having to work within a dominant discourse about pedagogy. This discourse is one that is perennially concerned with maintaining classroom discipline and control, and, here, control and learning are treated as synonymous. Again, comments such as these were a feature of *all* of those interviewed, showing a shared preoccupation. Whatever my perception of an individual's personal style as a teacher in the classroom (whether 'strict', 'kind', 'firm', 'funny' or 'easy'), these teachers understandably expressed their preferences about the manner in which they preferred to work within the parameters of classroom control and children understanding 'boundaries'. This desire for structure and guidance also extended to the curriculum, suggesting that these teachers could be said to have worked within a dominant pedagogical discourse which did, indeed, give very little room for professional manoeuvre. One colleague in particular (T11) demonstrated that he had an awareness of alternative pedagogical approaches but nevertheless stuck to the dominant model he had been inducted into, since it was an institutional and ideological 'given', following the line of least resistance. He presented himself as an inexperienced pragmatist, very much with his own ideas, but was happy to operate within the ideological context in which his work was located. In this case, he was not so much unwitting in the way he enacted his role, but he consciously suppressed the

possibility for alternative models, a kind of occupational 'selling out' perhaps?

'I think as a new teacher [the National Curriculum is] a good thing. It does mean that children being taught in London, Manchester, or wherever, are taught, generally, the same content. So I think that is a good thing and I couldn't imagine coming in as a new teacher, not having a National Curriculum, and just teaching, say, geography. Where do you start? I can't imagine doing that, so in that way it's a good thing. I think also that the QCA unit plans, which aren't statutory but I would imagine 99% of schools use them, are helpful, but they are prescriptive in what you teach. It would be nice to have the freedom, if you wanted, to spend the whole day on history, say, bringing in English and so on. I suppose you could do that but it just seems more difficult to do because you have all of the stuff there set out for you: do this first, do that then and so on... You have your English, the NLS, which this half term you're supposed to be doing these objectives, for maths as well you've got other objectives that you have got to cover. So when we plan it all fits together. You could do it yourself if you thought about it well in advance, it would take a lot of planning... but when you've been at college you're told you have to use the NLS. This is what you plan for. I don't know if it's being scared, but I'm wary of moving away from that.' (T11)

Since my colleagues expressed a plethora of consciously held opinions about to how they saw their practices in relation to prevailing policy, the next question is about how these teachers reconciled or balanced their situated professional selves with the demands of institutional compliance. Is it possible, professionally, to flex muscle by making pedagogical decisions with a mind to officially prescribed practices, but still with a vestige of professional independence? In relation to my interest in the possibility of professional misrecognition among teachers, how much were they knowingly complicit in the manner in which they operated at an institutional level, or how far (like T11 perhaps) did they consciously suppress their own thinking or were they, indeed, simply 'acting'?

## **Institutional Compliance and the Self**

Whether teachers like or not, whether they even recognise the fact, they are compelled nowadays to work within institutional school structures more than ever before (Bennett 1995). Schools now devise more and more policies on just about every aspect of a school's function, a response to the trend of management rationalisation that has increasingly been identified as a feature of the public services (Hargreaves and Goodson 1996; Whitty 2000).

Experience has shown me that these policies only vary in their detail between schools and that they are based on generic policy structures that emanate from the desks of advisers from local education authorities. My colleagues had an understandably mixed knowledge and understanding of the school's policies - a tangible result of the intervention of the local education authority - not least because there are so many policies and they would be far too detailed to memorise even if teachers were inclined to do so. All of those interviewed were able to talk about the 'spirit' of the main policies, such as the policy on teaching and learning, although for the most part teachers said they still retained a degree of individual control over how they had implemented, or acted upon, them. Above all, policies were considered by all respondents as synonymous with a notion of 'good practice' (Grace 1978). That such codified and stipulated ideas about what, exactly, constitutes effective pedagogical practice exist, is testimony to the degree to which individual volition, let alone autonomy, is subjugated to a series of bureaucratically determined practices underwritten by the school. Moreover, these teachers frequently cited policies as providing a useful barometer of the success of their professional activities.

Policies in this school appeared to exert a normative influence over individual practice. Since the Teaching and Learning Policy - along with associated policies on specific curriculum areas including assessment and staff induction - defined the corporate functions of the school, these policies were regarded as encompassing the whole range of pedagogical possibilities. Seen in this way, policies determine:

*'[H]ow other teachers in the school perceive how you're doing your job... But, you know, I think at times I'm strict, maybe at times a bit too strict and as I said, sometimes maybe I need to just ease back occasionally. I think some of that is also to encourage the children to do as well as they can and to be involved in the lesson as well as they can as well. I think they spend their time there to work as productively as they can, I think they can get out of the lessons as much as they can, hopefully at times enjoying what they're doing.'* (T4, my emphasis).

These comments imply that pupil performance, in the form of educational outputs by being 'productive', was a major preoccupation for this teacher. This particular model of educational achievement is either stated or implicit in the school's policy documents, which have become enshrined in practice.

More experienced teachers tended to recognise the significance of policy-making on their working practices. They used curriculum policies to their advantage, invoking them as subject co-ordinators as tools for securing the co-operation of others. This active process can be seen more as 'strategic redefinition' of policy mandates, rather than simply 'strategic compliance' (Lacey 1977).



The idea of policies as malleable, and rarely fixed for long, certainly seems to be borne out by my own knowledge of the school and the number of times policies have been revamped in order to bring them in line with staff perceptions of approved 'vogue' practice. They do not emanate simply from the school's management hierarchy, however. They arise from all professional directions, often as the result of a subject co-ordinator attending local authority subject meetings and courses.

There is, therefore, a heavy exposure of teachers to the pedagogical influence of advisers whom they meet. Whilst some of these policies are 'reworked, tinkered with, nuanced' (Ball 1999a:126) as recreations of practices ideologically derived from such external influences, they are not simply 'ramshackle, compromise, hit-and-miss affairs' (*ibid.*, p. 126), in the manner that Ball argues. They are expressions, largely adopted ones, of the occupational culture of teachers and teaching, which come to represent core occupational values (Hargreaves 1980) or a form of professional 'middle ground', perceived by teachers as both moderate and safe (Measor and Woods 1984).

Yet school policies were not generally perceived by interviewees to affect what goes on in the classroom in a very tangible sense. The headteacher had a pragmatic attitude towards policies and the institutional compliance that they legislate:

'I've always had policies to dust off when somebody wants to know where they are... you've got the policy if anybody asks but it doesn't mean you've got to follow it because a lot of it is day-to-day practice... If teachers read the policy when it matters or

practice the policy when it matters and then go back to what they believe is best, then surely that is professional freedom?' (T2)

However, the high level of corporate similarity evident in this school (propagated through various policy documents) meant what little professional latitude existed was operating from within very clearly established institutional parameters. If teachers had *believed* they were freer to make unfettered choices about how to work, based on the existence of an inner professional self as opposed to absorbed policy mandates, then this could be viewed as a form of professional misrecognition in its own right, as defined on page 10 and explained on page 15. The same teacher said:

'There's always a danger when talking in these terms of generalising... Each teacher is an individual, and one of the things that characterises teachers as an occupational group is that individualism, which I don't think has gone away... What has happened is that individualism has been reined in and I think that is a good thing. I worked in both worlds, if you like, when there was complete anarchy, and was a part of that, and you just went away and got on with whatever you thought you had to do and nobody ever asked you what you were doing. You weren't accountable for what you did and you had free rein to reap absolute havoc and some people did!' (T2)

These remarks were very interesting in the context of the scope for teachers to be individuals in an increasingly systematised educational set of values: they work within preordained pedagogic discourses that some have claimed emanate partly from professional conceptions of 'self'. Yet, according to this teacher, they needed to have the professional vacillations to which such freedoms (whether real or simply perceived) give rise, 'reined in' for the collective good. This use of a powerful metaphor shows that he acknowledged his vested interest in securing institutional compliance among staff while hinting at an awareness that

within these parameters there was some room for manoeuvre, but not much. He also contrasted the present system of professional activity, codified by a prescribed curriculum, scrutinised by inspection and underwritten by school policies, with his perceptions of being a new teacher in the 1970s:

‘As a newly qualified teacher in my first school, nobody, nobody told me what I was supposed to do. I went into the classroom on the very first day, I don’t think the Head ever came into the classroom. I had nobody to latch onto as a mentor, nobody told me anything at all. I had a list of kids’ names. I had the furniture and I had no clue what I was doing. There were no guidelines, no curriculum, no schemes of work. I wasn’t required to plan or anything and I had a whole year like that and it was universal! So why is anybody surprised when you have that situation in the late 1960s and early 1970s when there was total anarchy... You could do whatever you liked in the classroom, you could sit and show your kids videos for the entire year and nobody ever came in to check what you were doing’. (T2)

It does not necessarily follow that working under more highly structured conditions gives rise to the ideologically derived and restricted thinking, leading to what I am suggesting is an aspect of professional misrecognition. This experienced school leader, while acknowledging the change of emphasis in recent years from teacher ‘education’ to teacher ‘training’ (Hargreaves 1996), drew attention to what he perceived as common sense professionalism. This position is, itself, arguably firmly rooted in its own discourse of professional pragmatism (Moore et al. 2002a). It is an understandable perspective for a school leader to adopt. It can also be understood in terms of Hargreaves’ (*ibid*, p.20) explanation of ‘post modern professionalism’ in which the complex, and often contradictory, notion of teaching as a ‘professional’ activity is mistakenly

based on the intensification and bureaucratisation of the role, rather than on individual thought.

I do not, however, claim to be able to gauge or measure the degree to which this might be a real phenomenon among these individuals. I *am* interested in speculating about the existence of such an effect, though. This speculation reminded me of Bourdieu's (1976) social theories relating to individual social constructions in an occupational context like this, becoming misrecognised by individuals as being plainly and unambiguously *natural*, and this was suggested earlier too. Teacher 2 went on to argue:

'You've got to be careful that you don't dismiss as blind obedience this type of thing when in fact it may well be that somebody finds that doing something works. The three-part lesson isn't a new idea. I like doing the three part lesson. It works for me... Just because Ofsted's current accepted practice is that the three-part lesson is a good idea, what's wrong with that? If it works, then use it. And if you find that writing the objective on the board helps you or the children to focus on what is being learnt, then that's good too...I not sure teachers actually think that deeply, which sounds awfully snobbish. What people like me, in my position, are in danger of doing is attributing to teachers motives that they haven't got. Most of them come to work because that is what they do and they go home again and at the end of the day it's a job... I'm not sure how deeply a lot of them think about what they do. It may well be that this pragmatic business comes into it, that the way of getting the job done the best they can, with least aggro, is to follow the yellow brick road really. If you want to be creative, it's hard work and, in fact, although I would say that teachers nowadays work a lot harder in many ways than I did, certain aspects of the job are a lot easier.'

**(T2)**

This respondent seemed to be arguing, here, that teaching is now so bureaucratically intensified that there is not the physical or intellectual time and

space to be 'creative' as there was in a more liberal occupational past. Ironically, he seemed to find his preference in the highly prescribed pragmatic discourses, currently favoured by Ofsted too. Such pragmatism, a powerful phenomenon noted in the pilot research, gave rise to the desire to understand more about the motivations underlying it. This prompts questions about whether teachers were professionally conscious of the discourses within which they worked, or whether they relied more on these structures in a manner that really did suppress their professional consciousness in the manner that Teacher 2 took account of through his blunt cynical pragmatism, alongside the sincere pragmatism evident in the data: 'I want to survive, they want to do the best they can, and there's a difference' (T2).

Based on the anecdotal evidence that arose in the process of interviewing colleagues, this unapologetically cynical attitude appears to be a result of many years' experience and an awareness of the cyclical nature of much innovation and reform in curriculum preferences. Others were even more explicit about the degree of professional autonomy they believed could be exercised within the broad parameters of school and governmental policy:

'[B]eing your own boss as well. You've got to work within the school's policy framework obviously, but being able to decide what you do in a lesson and not having somebody standing over you every second... being in control really of your own week and every week is different, whereas in retail it was very monotonous'. (T6)

It is reasonable to infer from such comments that this relatively new teacher had a greater sense of freedom than was actually the case, since she interpreted

the lack of monotony in teaching, compared with her previous job, as inseparable from greater variety and scope for occupational manoeuvre. It was interesting to speculate whether those who had passed their initial one or two years' service in teaching, and had overcome any sense of novelty in their new roles, not only worked unequivocally within sanctioned institutional policies and management structures, but also reinforced and replicated them through their own actions in the classroom. Moreover, these teachers spoke self-consciously about such behaviours:

'I think sometimes I'm perhaps a bit over demanding with the children. I think there are times when I can be a little bit too off with them, I think, and sometimes I need to recognise I need to be a little calmer at times. I think it's because of an internal pressure on myself in terms of thinking about, um, maybe what other people are thinking about how things are going in my class... I remember elements of the Teaching and Learning Policy, for example the information with regard to classroom organisation and marking and homework expectations, so there are elements in that and also classroom management and behaviour. I think early on when I read through it, it was useful to know what the school's expectations were, what I needed to do and how I needed to fit in with those expectations.' (T4)

'I can give orders. I can accept orders but also, as a friend, I'd like to think I am approachable, you know if someone has a problem they'll come and speak to me about it... I just had to be firm and say, look, this is what has been provided and that's it. We're going with it. And I think that worked because I think those colleagues now do feel the benefit of what we're doing in assessment'. (T5)

'Well, I work within the curriculum boundaries, making sure what you teach is within the half termly plan as such... if I say guidelines rather than boundaries, guidelines... so it's nice to have something to focus on but you are still in charge of how you deliver it, that's what I like.' (T6)

Several interesting observations can be made here. There appeared to be a preoccupation, evident in these words, with the importance of being in control along with an awareness that their performances as teachers were being watched, both by management and through school policy. This might be an example of the potential dissonance that occurs between *internally persuasive discourses* (Britzman 1991:21-22), routinely experienced by teachers, and their subordination to externally determined discourses of power, accountability and authority. It was inside this occupational schism that I began to suspect was the locus of professional misrecognition.

Others, when probed, expressed similarly ambivalent attitudes. Teachers may feel that they are obliged to reproduce favoured pedagogies, working in modes relating closely to terms of acceptable policy and what has come to be known generically as 'good practice'. This form of practice is based largely on prevailing discourses that emanate from political quarters. This tendency might be seen to militate against professional deep thinking, while fuelling professional misrecognition, through an effect of intellectual passification:

'I've been using the schemes that were already in place, so I'm guilty of [automatically following previous teachers' schemes]'.  
(T6)

Another teacher commented:

'With policies, the thing is they're all written down on paper but when you walk around a school you see the policies put into practice and I think it's a lot easier to have an overview of what the school expects and how you do things than actually sitting down and reading it. See what I mean?' (T10)

In common with the others, this teacher did not need to 'think' too much about policies, since corporate practice was so embedded in the collective work of the staff that policy was maintained through professional transmission. It was passed from colleague-to-colleague, through enactment and the mimicry of others on the part of the newcomers, as 'knowledge flowing downwards' (Southworth 1995:218). This idea relates to Ball's (1999a) recognition of policies and policy-making as an organic function within the context of professional action: policies at once are a form of control and are, in turn, controlled by those who enact them.

Such was the ingrained and irrefutable valorisation of policies in the school that dissension would be hard to imagine. When pressed, these teachers did see some scope for interpreting policies in a more flexible manner than an over-rigid interpretation of them would have permitted. However, none suggested that maverick or fully independent thinking could be accommodated under these circumstances, since it would threaten the perceived nature of institutional consensus. One commented:

'You would have to justify your reason for it, um, I think it would be considered if it was a valid judgement, and discussed at a staff meeting or on a training day, but at the end of the day it's a collaborative approach in the school with the governors making that decision. So our voice is listened to, it's one voice among many if you like'. **(T6)**

Which, then, for these teachers came first I asked: policy or practice? Mainly, these teachers simply assumed that policies were informed by educational theory and debate beyond the confines of the school itself. One respondent,



however, said that he thought a policy was more a codification of the consensus on preferred practices, rather than simply being derived from ideas enjoying favour in the wider educational establishment:

‘A policy to me should just be a reflection of the general practice that goes on in the school. What happens over time is that the policy will change slightly to suit the way you go about different things’ (T7)

His view ran contrary to those of most others in the sample. Generally, policies were seen as the school’s expression of practices favoured by prevailing educational ideologies, *drip fed* (West 1998) into the school as a result of the largesse of government, communicated to the grass roots by local authority advisers, and used as benchmarks of a school’s bureaucratic compliance by Ofsted. The pressure on teachers, also as subject co-ordinators, to reproduce policies from within given professional and pedagogic parameters was seen as considerable, leaving some of them ‘second-guessing’ what needed to be done next in order to secure official approval. As a means of generating and maintaining the status quo in the school, policies had become more than definitions of the curriculum in practice; they had ‘become’ that practice:

‘[Policies]... are becoming more useful than they used to be because they did used to be very big... pages and pages, and when I recently wrote my music policy I started to get an idea about *what a policy should be* and all you’re saying is what we, as a school, have as *our philosophy* on that subject and what it is we should be *aiming at...*’ (T8, my emphasis)

However, of interest in the context of understanding professional misrecognition as a genuine phenomenon, *our philosophy* (as T8 referred to it) may not be solely within the gift of the school and its teachers to determine. The ideological

landscape from which such policies had emanated was effectively limited, as has already been suggested. Despite one colleague's assertion that policies were little adhered to (T2), and another's confession that policies were merely 'skimmed' once at the beginning of a teacher's employment in the school and never again consulted (T12), the subliminal awareness of these teachers and their partial knowledge of the contents of policies and guidelines served to shape their thinking in a powerful way. Policies, in turn, became a means of 'policing' not just the curriculum in the school, but also pedagogical practices and the possibility for teacher choices in making decisions in the classroom. Therefore, policies become what Foucault (1977) describes as 'moral technologies', whereby not only the practice of teaching is defined and regulated, but it is being misrecognised as independent professional thinking. Adopting this perspective, such thinking in this school could be seen to have operated within a limited professional landscape, invisibly inscribed with ideological values to which these teachers might have been intellectually conditioned:

'We had a policy in my subject for some years and first of all I went around to see how people had coped with that and, in the light of the new *expectations*, what *needed* to be different'. (T9, my emphasis)

This impression - of policies as formalised interpretations of guided political thinking - was a common theme among the others. A similar understanding of the reason for the existence of policies and how they had evolved was evident in discussions among the others about pupil assessment, pupil behaviour, English, design technology, mathematics, science and the foundation subjects,

since several policies had been revisited and changes had been made in response to what we felt we ought to change.

When pressed about the purpose of policies, all responded similarly, suggesting that: '[T]he school has expectations in terms of the children's behaviour and the things that they do in their subjects' (T10). An acknowledgement of policies as benchmarks against which to make judgements about the degree of institutional compliance, to be demonstrated by individuals, was prominent in the data. There was also an awareness, among both less experienced, relatively junior colleagues and school leaders, that policies provided the institutional mandate to which they were called and that any deviation from this mandate could both invoke disapproval and be used as a management tool of control and corporate manipulation:

'I think if there was something different that I really wanted to do I would discuss it with senior management. If it was something that I strongly wanted to do, then I'd give my reasons... But I would not carry it out if told not to'. (T10)

While not expressed in terms of blind faith and an uncritical acceptance of a truistic pedagogical mythology, these teachers were clear in asserting the educational virtue of the school's policies as beneficial influences on the quality of teaching and learning. The very use of the term 'quality' is, itself, shot through with ideological assumptions related to post-industrial notions of commodified forms of education and institutional 'performativity' (Ball 1999a), and the rise of the 'quality movement' in public services in general (Morley 2000). One teacher expressed a sense of dilemma over the intensification of his bureaucratic duties, whilst simultaneously recognising a benefit in terms of

the potential for quality in the educational experiences for pupils. He followed official policy:

‘[N]ot because the Head says you’ve got to it, but because it will help in your teaching and help the children, that’s why people do it’. (T11)

Another, more senior, colleague was unabashed in seeing policies as overt measures of control. We are reminded, then, of a distinction made by Wilcox (1996) in which one teacher, it could be argued, had already been *colonised*, imbued with the values and perspectives of available theories of academic and institutional performance, whereas the other teacher may have used policies to subjugate the professional will of colleagues to the prevailing agenda for school development. In essence, though, the two perspectives amounted to the same thing; a range of occupational outlooks that contained the possibility for respondents to misrecognise the origins of the ideological basis upon which their practice was propagated and reproduced. Policies do effectively act as conduits of favoured or ‘good’ practice (Hanlon 1998) and define professional knowledge itself. One teacher remarked:

[P]olicies are there to be used as a guideline for what you should be doing and how you should be doing it... I think it’s good that everyone’s more or less doing the same thing and we all know what is expected of us and it’s for those who come into the school to know what we’re doing as well. It gives them knowledge’. (T12)

An interesting implication emerged in comments like these. What the teacher seemed to be saying was that she had a strong sense of professional ‘preserve’ or conservatism in taking responsibility for the body of knowledge that surrounds teaching. In describing his theories relating to the ‘cultural capital’

possessed by various occupations, Hanlon (1998) argues that teachers, though, neither possess such capital, nor can they possess it, in a post-modern world in which it is mistaken to compare teaching with other traditional professions. More than this, the ubiquitous and overwhelming nature of policies do come to *define* educational philosophies, perhaps misrecognised by teachers as the fruit of their own thinking, but with their origins firmly rooted in a limited set of possibilities from state-sanctioned discourses made available to schools. These ideological selections find their way into a school's policies and come to define professional thinking while possibly contributing to the tensions felt by some teachers in negotiating their paths between the self and mandated practices. One teacher remarked, when talking about subject policies, that they:

[R]eflect current thinking on best practice... a guideline about what to do... a map of how to get from A to B without falling into the swamp'. (T9)

The implication is that 'guidelines' at once offer practical help, being eminently appealing to a *pragmatic* professional approach, yet encouraging the suppression of a more independent mode of thinking. The result - the teacher portrayed as supplicant transmitter of received wisdom - comes to define both the professional horizon within which it is possible to operate and a means of controlling those who would seek to stretch these ideologically defined boundaries. Again, it might be the tension between individuals and the educational system that lies at the centre of misrecognising perspectives. As Maw (1996) states:

'Not only do such [moral] technologies produce a normalising truth about the individual school, they also induce self-regulation in the observed through identification with the norm and the

possibilities of gratification or punishment associated with particular judgements'. (1996:26)

During the interviews, it became apparent that teachers in leadership positions in the school were, in effect, interpreting both school and individual 'performance', by using this frame of reference. One colleague expressed this idea in especially powerful terms. In his use of metaphorical language, he spoke from within a transparently managerialist and performative discourse about the importance, as he saw it, of using policies not just to guide professional activity, but to censure any transgression from favoured practices. This teacher's comments were peppered with references to 'scaffolding', 'incremental learning' and a powerfully penal metaphor to do with 'releasing' teachers from policy straightjackets, once they had demonstrated *his* vision of the curriculum in the classroom. Again, this view is resonant with Foucault's (1979) conception of 'moral technologies', implied by doing the *right* thing and inscribed in ideology, along with concomitant measures to censure those who might be seen as uncooperative:

'In a previous school the curriculum was so poor, so undernourished, that it was practically non-existent. We were failing the children across the board because we had no incremental learning. Teachers, although they were told to teach, say, Victorians... what aspects of the Victorians should they teach? It was just awful. So the first thing I did was to bring in QCA and say, right, we are all now following QCA, because we needed that scaffold. We needed something to build on so that I could guarantee to the children that there was an element of continuity and progression for them... and there it was, on a plate, for any failing teacher, for anybody! For any failing school, it's there: follow this and you will succeed, which is great. Over a period of time, I released teachers from the activities but retained the objectives, so I said right we can now cross out the activities because there's far too much in the QCAs, far too many expectations: they expect far too much of you in a six or seven week period. So I released teachers from that and they invented their own activities and then became creative teachers again

based on the progressive learning objectives provided by QCA... I think [policies] enhance teachers' teaching. Therefore they help in children's learning, I would hope. They know what is expected... the standards that we talked about. If it's just a piece of paper... it means nothing and we're quite justified in saying, well, what's the point, but if say our TLP is reviewed annually and with every new member of staff, saying this is what we believe... then we have a backbone that we can use to say, well no, you're moving away from what we've asked you to do as a school.'

**(T13)**

Institutional compliance can, therefore, leave little genuine room for the 'professional self' to exercise an intellectual level of freedom to consider teaching and learning outside the parameters set by school policies. This possibility has been noted especially in relation to headteachers as being the locus both of a school's power and of its ideological characteristics (Southworth 1995).

Evident in these extracts from conversations with colleagues is the possibility for individual selections to be made, but from a limited set of possibilities. Since every aspect of a school's functioning now seems to be inscribed in policy terms in one form or another, the extent of pedagogical choice for teachers is akin to making a selection from a limited restaurant menu. So, it is likely that teachers here were not simply colonised by ideological discourses in education prevalent at given times. Rather, according to this view, they were deeply imbued with the structures and language of policies and policy-making from the very earliest stages of their careers. There is nothing ground-breaking in this realisation. The point that needs to be made in the context of this research is that this one element of teaching in practice could suggest one tangible dimension of the phenomenon being referred to here as 'misrecognition' since

these teachers either felt that they had genuine room for professional independence, or saw policies as simply reifying the 'good practice' that professional common sense should have recognised as a matter of course. This belief, that policies simply inscribe what has come to be trumpeted as 'good practice' - demonstrated by 'good teachers' (Moore 2004) - is evident in these interviews. Therefore, what appears to lead to a reification of 'good practice' over other, outmoded or alternative practices, emerged as an interesting feature in my discussions with colleagues in trying to understand more about possibilities for professional misrecognition. This theme in the research is examined next.

### **The Reification of Good Practice**

If one feature of misrecognising ideological values in education as one's own can be related to the universalising effects of policies in schools, then it is the ring-fenced and generic styles of pedagogical practice as espoused in these policies that appear to lead to a form of reification of so-called 'good practice'.

Hargreaves (1980) suggested that teachers are gradually and simultaneously absorbed both into the systemically bureaucratic *and* cultural worlds that comprise teaching. As they get used to the intensification caused by frequent reform and supplementary educational initiatives (Hargreaves 1996), *good practice* becomes the ubiquitous and all-encompassing phrase used to represent assumptions about commonly held views as to what constitutes favoured models of teaching and learning: teachers thereby come to work



within prevailing discourses, as described earlier. If teachers are not completely 'colonised' linguistically by these discourses of good practice (Kress 1989), they are so immersed in talking about them in staff meetings, at co-ordinators' meetings and, latterly, through what some regard as a utilitarian form of initial teacher training, threatening to preclude deeper professional and critical self-reflection (Macbeath 1999), that the very term 'good practice' assumes a monumental professional truth to which some may feel they have to aspire. Much of what my colleagues had to tell me was couched in terms of *good practice*, and I wondered whether there was an elemental core of such professional behaviours or whether the very term was being used in a universalising sense that described merely perceived notions about what good teaching is because that is how 'good teachers' wish to be seen (Moore 2004). What emerged in my conversations was a pattern of thought among teachers suggesting that good practice is synonymous with carrying out government mandates, even when the individual may feel somewhat uncomfortable in doing so. One teacher said:

'Prior to the National Literacy, English teaching had been a little bit vague, from my own personal point of view... you knew you had to teach children to read and write and we knew that we had to get them [to write] a whole story as well as good individual sentences and we knew in terms of their reading it wasn't just about them being able to read the words on the page, but that they had to take some level of understanding from that. Obviously, we knew those things but what I found helpful about the NLS was that it did bring to my attention an awful lot that I would have overlooked in my teaching otherwise... it made me suddenly think about phonics for example; I would never have spoken to children about phonics, although I suppose I would have spoken about letters, but the whole idea of breaking things up into individual sounds and phonics I found really helpful'. (T8)

From what she said, this teacher clearly did possess a form of pedagogical belief gained earlier in her training, before the literacy strategy had appeared, although for her it remained unspecified in her own mind. Her less overtly articulated pedagogical approach was, until then, based on an intuitive grasp of how children develop their linguistic skills and knowledge. Perhaps she found an appeal in adopting - through institutional policy modifications - a named and specified approach (she mentioned 'phonics'), convinced of its efficacy and couched in structured and specified pedagogical terms? As she spoke, this teacher appeared to be recognising (rather than misrecognising) her 'active location' within given discourses (Coldron and Smith 1999) in a manner that could equally be seen as enlightened. Could this serve as further evidence in other cases of 'blind' adherence to favoured teaching methodologies (the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies being prime examples), that such professional misrecognition leads to a *de*-professionalising state? Certainly, for the most part, the teachers who were interviewed made repeated mention of central government mandates, along with an implied reification of classroom and institutional practices that is either reflected more widely in schools, or would win favour with Ofsted inspectors, along with commensurate increases in educational 'standards'. Another teacher was clear about this:

'I am a great believer in these strategies. I believe again that they have driven English and maths forward and increased the learning opportunities for children. Before then, teaching of English was very sporadic; pockets of excellence and very little consistency. What I believe the two strategies have done for us is to prescribe the learning steps children can take... and if teachers use them effectively then children will move on effectively. If we use them efficiently, if we use them well I have no doubt that children will progress. What I didn't like about them was the prescribed teaching styles in them. I didn't like the way it ordered my thinking for me... that wasn't right. If we had been given the learning objectives... and here's a suggestion about how, then

that would be better. However, prescribing lessons that should be taught in certain ways has given rise to a lot more thinking. Teachers are happy now to... reflect on their lessons. Did their lessons ever stop the learning objective, did their lessons ever communicate what the learning was about and did it reflect in the learning? In the past, indeed in the way I was taught to teach, it was not like that. I like to feel that we now have a great model to plan our lessons.' **(T13)**

This philosophy of teaching and of the learning process, framed within a discourse of a caring and dialogical pedagogy, was expressed similarly by the other respondents. There seemed to be a yearning for 'consistency', as T13 expressed it, and a level of educational rationalism that explains the processes involved in learning in a straightforward, unproblematic and common-sense manner. This model of children's cognitive development is essentially hierarchical, arguably based on a superseded and simplistic Piagetian model of child development. One teacher also gave his support for what he saw as the order that needed to be imposed on a wayward educational system that had run out of control in the more liberal 1960s:

'[U]nderneath it all, it seems to be a good thing that at least somebody, whoever it is... has determined what being educated actually means in terms of this country'. **(T2)**

These words encapsulate in a powerful way what most of these teachers expressed: despite making teachers compromise on the scope for individual choices and preferences, government-sanctioned teaching methodologies to teach (or 'deliver') the prescribed curriculum provided a means of reconciling the professional self, and all its attendant insecurities, with a style of teaching as possessing a corpus of 'good practice', mediated through officially sanctioned pedagogies. In other words, it provided a vestige of certainty in an uncertain world. A different teacher, in an extract already quoted, had no doubt that she

was working within a discourse that legitimated a particular kind of 'good practice':

- I. Where do you think the idea [the system of record-keeping] comes from, why do we do it?
- T1. It's a part of what the government wants of each child isn't it?
- I. Is it? What do you mean by what the government wants?
- T1. As part of the school knowing where the individual children have developed through the year... through the years.

When discussing notions of good practice, a recurring theme in the interviews was one of the importance of structure; knowing where the child 'is' in determining next steps in a clearly hierarchical teaching programme. While it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the pedagogical premise upon which this perspective is based, it is of relevance when considered alongside a variety of comments emphasising the importance of the school's 'structure' in giving prominence to favoured practices, by providing teachers with an ideological licence to work in such ways. As one teacher remarked:

'I've really enjoyed having that focus and direction here because it has given me more of a direction... and if they aren't doing it in my next school I think I would still have that for myself... I like the way we do our planning. It's one of the things I'll take with me when I go back home, because each day I can see what I'm doing the next day. This is my objective. That's what I'm going to be aiming to teach and I'm going to make sure the children achieve in each lesson, so it gives you a clear way of thinking, you understand what you need to do. It gives you a focus as well, whereas back home you don't even have that.' (T12)

It is interesting to note that good practice was identified by some teachers in this study as being indistinguishable from structured and consistent practices across the entire school. Structures imply pedagogical efficacy or, from within

the discourse of accountability, effective practice based on consistency and purposeful corporate activity, reflecting a clear sense of a now well-worn management rationality (Mortimore, Sammons et al. 1988). Such structures might be seen to represent a crutch upon which teachers come to rely; the antithesis of individualism, flair and maverick professional behaviour. From such a position, not only does practice become reified, as an irrefutable *mantra* that allows teachers to reference their own performance, but the school itself becomes a transmitter of reified good practice, encouraging institutional compliance and corporate identity while playing down the roles - or power - of individuals to exert any real influence:

‘It’s important for the school to achieve this [Training School] status. I don’t think every school should... we have a good structure within our school, a strong management team, a strong head, we’ve a good head should I say, a very good head, and of course consequently the management team is very strong and very supportive and therefore that knocks on again to the teaching. I think our teachers on the whole are very strong, very good and are supported. So we have all these elements of good practice in the school, so why shouldn’t we be able to share it with other schools and other teachers. We have students coming in - that’s good - and I have heard students comment that we’re very supportive, very encouraging and that we give them a good grounding for their learning... they learn far more in our school. I think it’s important that we can share that practice... it’s the next step isn’t it, sharing that good practice?’ (T1)

Examples of the practices subsumed under the *mantra* of ‘good’, and repeatedly mentioned in the interviews, included the adoption and use of the lesson structures promoted by the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies:

‘It’s better to have a structure for everyone to follow and then adapt it within the class... but I think that’s just me on a personal level, because you need to see where you’re at and where you’re going to... to develop [children’s] knowledge as much as you can and give them the best educationally... I thought it was a good structure for a lesson that I could adapt to suit myself’. (T8)

Again, running through the interview data was a preoccupation among these teachers of order and orderliness as being inseparable from good practice (a clearly 'common sense' conclusion to draw, one might think) and this was referred to in several contexts. Achieving this level of orderliness means that both internal and external imperatives to perform have to be followed, putting pressure on staff and discouraging an openly critical examination of some of these demands. It leads to a situation whereby work intensification (Wilcox and Gray 1996) may be seen to contribute to a professional misrecognition of the motivations and meanings behind some of the actions taken by teachers and the school:

'I mean it's just something else [the staff] hadn't realised that they needed to do and you have to get it done and get it done in such a short time. I mean recently with the foundation (stage) and the profile documents... it's just that it's been like changes that might have been because I hadn't looked at them over a long period, but it just seemed to me very quick, quick in working, you know?'  
**(T3)**

'I think we have to have some guidelines for people to follow, otherwise it would revert to when I was at school; there was very little assessment and formal teaching at primary school, so I think it has raised standards for people to know what to achieve and where to aim for, so yes'. **(T6)**

According to some of those interviewed, principal among the characteristics of showing good practice was clear planning and conducting (or 'delivering') a three-part lesson. This included writing a learning objective on the board for pupils in each lesson and making explicit in plans, and when talking to colleagues, the ordinal position of pupils in relating their educational progress directly to National Curriculum criteria. Part of the recipe for a 'good' lesson, it

appeared, included a commensurate fear of the loss of pedagogical control, since control itself is a key feature of such plans and structures:

‘We need to plan, to be straightforward if something happened, and you had to be left with a class, you don’t really know where the children are at. You’d need to know that, so there is a need for [planning] to be put in place, yeah... This is the setting we’re in. I think when the previous deputy set it up and we were using the planning books anyway, and they were monitored, she set it up in a more structured way in which you should put the objectives at the top on the board and what the children are supposed to do’. (T3)

This almost strongly felt need to impose so much orderliness on the learning process gives more weight to a view of primary teachers as limited in their scope for thinking either outside predefined pedagogical parameters, or more profoundly about the pedagogical assumptions underlying their work. So deep-seated are these assumptions amongst the respondents, I suggest, that the sheer force of recent initiatives promoted by central government, such as the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, means that some teachers may be employing teaching methods which do not accord with their own, previously formed ideas about what works best in the classroom:

Int: Why do you use the literacy document if you feel it doesn’t suit your needs?

T6: No, I don’t mean literally but, parts of it we need to have, like the words, the phonics, that sort of thing we need to cover, and what they need to know by the end of the year. It’s nice to have that. I mean it’s nice when you start teaching career to have some sort of format. It’s a guideline, isn’t it and something for you to follow because we move from year group to year group and you’re not going to use the same criteria for Reception as you would for Year 3 or Year 2, so it’s good to have some sort of format to follow.

This teacher appeared to recognise the mandate with which teachers are charged to teach according to National Curriculum expectations. She expressed

her conformist position despite showing some disdain for this mandate. As has previously been argued, her conscious reflection on this dilemma might be understood psychologically in defensive terms as well, leading to a form of psychological separation (Hollway and Jefferson 2003) from what she felt she knew and how she had to present the curriculum (often widely referred to by these teachers as 'delivery') in the classroom. This teacher was not alone in making assumptions about the pedagogical structures effectively being imposed on her through an increasing control over practice, as well as the curriculum. The alternative to good practice, it seemed, was a perception of the previous educational anarchy of the 1960s and 1970s when, allegedly, few teachers knew what they were doing:

'I think we have to have some guidelines for people to follow, otherwise it would revert to when I was at school; there was very little assessment and formal teaching at primary school, so I think it has raised standards for people to know what to achieve and where to aim for'. (T6)

The further specification of the detail of the National Curriculum, through the widespread adoption of the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority's (Q.C.A.) guidelines, serves to promote an acceptable form of reified good practice too. Here, we see teachers losing sight, perhaps, of the source of the present National Curriculum, and organising their teaching very closely along lines implied by the Q.C.A. documents. These documents, though not statutory, contain very specific curriculum and cultural selections of skills and knowledge that children 'need' to acquire (also suggested by Teacher 2), despite some reservations about a rigid over-interpretation of these curriculum specifications:



'I think [the Q.C.A. documents are] really good as well, a good structure to use, basic ideas and examples to use and to adapt to suit yourself in class... Children learn more if they are into it... But I would like to see us go back to topics because they allow you to develop your interests with the class... but I will do what I need to do. The Q.C.A. guidelines can be prescriptive but it depends on how you use them. If you are the type of person who uses them like this-and-this then it's restrictive, but if you are like me, someone who'll say we'll try it like this or that but take it that way if needed, you can alter them'. (T5)

From what she said, this teacher worked with a self-diagnosing orientation towards mandated policies and their versions of good practice, but she may still be seen to be operating within a limited set of curricular possibilities. This might have been the case, since she tweaked - rather than truly interrogated - the prescription contained within the Q.C.A. subject documents.

Professed self-confidence to adapt or reshape received versions of good practice was not shown by all of those interviewed. Older, more experienced teachers had seen curriculum innovation come and go. They noted the cyclical nature of changes in official educational policy and had come to recognise the *dirigiste* nature of much government policy in exerting increasing occupational power and control over teachers and schools (West 1998). One teacher sounded a note of caution about accepting this level of ideological steering, although, at the same time, he was suggesting a brand of professional wisdom that appeared to have been received from a notably *pragmatic* discourse:

'I think if you have a policy that tells you exactly what you have to do and exactly how you have got to do it, then I don't see the point of having fourteen individual teachers with their own experience, their own skills and ways of looking at things. There would be no point.' (T7)

More common responses among those interviewed seemed to suggest an ambivalent attitude towards professional mandates, derived from a prevailing educational discourse focused on prescription and specificity. It is as if repetitive and cyclical reinventions of the curriculum and teaching methods simply become a part of the prevailing educational discourse that teachers have come to expect. For them, the ability to stay in touch with these discourses, to enact them convincingly as a matter of professional survival (Richmond 2003), defines their professionalism itself: the professional project becomes concerned with not so much about knowing 'why', but knowing 'how to'. It is not so much evidence of 'strategic compliance' in simply emulating perceived good practice, it is a 'strategic redefinition' of it to allow for vacillations from old practices to new practices and vice versa (Measor, Sikes et al. 1985:149):

'Yes, [cross-curricular learning] is coming back now... and I think that has been happening in other schools, but when you've got a new strategy you have got to try it out. There's no point in not trying it out, but now that the powers that be have noted that if there's a rigid curriculum then it isn't working as well as it might, it's getting more lax and you have more leeway in what you're doing... When they brought the literacy strategy in, it came across that you mustn't deviate from the given methods, but they are now saying you can.' (T9)

Schools, through their policy and management structures, do create a form of pedagogical collectivism among teachers. 'Good practice' was a movable feast, according to some of these respondents, although enduring major changes in favoured models of teaching and learning was a part of this reifying process. It was seen as a process in which preferred practice was perpetuated through peer influence and the promulgation of classroom practices responding to the imperative of educational 'need'. One teacher, when asked about his

understanding of good practice in teaching, summed up this form of professional collectivism very clearly:

‘It comes down to the common good... the agreed approach. To do what is acceptable and what isn’t has to be communicated to people and that comes down from a strong leader and a strong team; what are our expectations of people and what is it that we want to achieve’. (T13)

His remarks indicated that good practice may be crystallised as simultaneous collective action, through *group mentalities* (James and Connolly 2000:57), and collective submission among teachers. Displayed through the reification of a form of good practice - as if it were possible to ‘bottle’ such practice - another powerful influence on professional misrecognition among teachers is implied. One facet of teachers’ consciousness that becomes apparent if this is the case relates to the desire among teachers to negotiate a safe path between powerful *internally persuasive discourses* and compelling official or *authoritative* mandates (Bakhtin 1981). The potentially threatening effect of this disparity between self and the educational system, according to Britzman (1991), causes individuals to attempt to negotiate their ways through a variety of occasionally contradictory discourses; this, for teachers as for others, means finding the right path between professional order and professional chaos, another preoccupation among those teachers who participated in this study. To sum up, a desire for order and the fear of pedagogical chaos started to emerge during the interviews - not so much consciously articulated by those who took part - but implicitly suggested in how they appeared to frame their professional values as teachers.

### **Order versus Chaos: finding the right path**

Teachers need to make sense of their work and purpose. They do this, of course, with a variety of perspectives, as multitudinous as the personalities of individuals who possess them. These perspectives are, I am arguing though, selected from a pre-determined set of ideological values, with which teachers are deeply imbued. To cope with this situation, to negotiate a professional pathway between competing ideas, pressures and preferences, teachers inevitably 'position' themselves, both consciously and unwittingly (Taylor 1989; Davies and Harre 1990). Teaching, as a vocational activity, has variously been described in terms of technicism (Brent and Ellison 1994) or pragmatism based on workplace contingencies (Moore 2000), as selectively or provisionally compliant (Richmond 2003) and also as a form of professional 'art' (Woods 1996).

One common factor identified in each of these perspectives on teaching is the complex nature of a role which involves managing people, resources and time as a part of the pedagogical encounter. Each of my colleagues drew attention to this factor, in various ways, during the interviews, and each talked about the considerable pressures involved in balancing these demands simultaneously, for sustained periods of time. There emerged a pattern in the responses that teachers largely work within prevailing educational, managerialist and institutionally compliant discourses, in which good practice becomes *reified*, providing a policy framework within which teachers are expected to operate. These teachers spoke about their daily practices in terms of maintaining control and guiding their pupils, keeping them on a metaphorical straight-and-narrow

path over a series of 'stepping stones', as one remarked, saying a lot about a teacher's preoccupation with stability, structure and, ultimately, control:

T1: If I was absent, I wouldn't want the children in the end to suffer because I wasn't there, for reasons of continuity.

Int: Why is it important for there to be continuity in the programme?

T1: For stability, and there is that... so the children know... they see if you're not there then they would say, well, we're not having this, what are we going to have? They themselves, I think, would be disheartened, disruptive... If schools didn't have policies at all, um, policies are written so that schools have a certain structure within their framework, ok, so teachers will think 'I should be teaching this element of the curriculum at this time'. So there is a sort of framework so teachers can know what to do and when to do it, and there is that sort of grounding, I keep referring to stepping stones.

These comments were interesting: they said much about a preoccupation with maintaining control; they implied an interpretation of the learning process as a linear - or clearly hierarchical - series of steps ('stepping stones'); they emphasised a conflation, in this teacher's mind, of order, discipline and learning, as interdependent causes and effects. A relationship between orderliness and learning was noted in this research earlier. Others echoed these comments, suggesting that negotiating a satisfactory pathway between competing institutional and ideological mandates, and personal predilections, is fraught with tension and is potentially dangerous – especially should the individual teacher happen to slip off a stone on this symbolic professional pathway! One teacher questioned summed up this possibility:

'There are going to be days when you think, God Almighty, what's happening, because somebody is doing something silly or perhaps I haven't planned well enough and you know sometimes when that is happening and things aren't as you like them... people are in and out of the classroom and most people come and say, it's amazing to see the children doing this and doing that

and they are working, whatever they're doing, sitting there and getting on with it. I don't like a lot of running around and things like that... no. (T3)

The irony that emerged in comments such as these is that the objects of the pedagogical enterprise (the pupils) were the very ones who threatened its integrity and success:

'I think some aspects perhaps of children's behaviour is something that isn't an enjoyable part of teaching, like when you do have to deal with certain individuals who are more challenging than others. I mean there have been times when I've taught certain individuals that it has just really got me down, working in the classroom environment and it has been very unproductive. Other people have said before that the deskilling process is very much evident within that scenario, so I think that's a big area from my point of view.' (T4)

We can detect in remarks such as these a familiar preoccupation with class control. The classroom is itself a world all of its own, within the embracing institutional structure, a site of professional 'struggle' (Bernstein 1996) and a place in which errant individualism requires control. Comments made by colleagues bear close similarity to the subjects of Britzman's (1991) study of student teachers and their struggles to cope. This preoccupation appears not to have diminished among some of my colleagues, even among those several years into their careers. Other comments by a range of teachers seem to substantiate this argument:

- 'I think sometimes I'm perhaps a bit over demanding with the children'. (T4)
- 'I would have shouted quite a bit but have learned to control myself and I am calmer now in situations where before I would have exploded'. (T5)

- 'I do like the children to be able to talk about what they're doing but, having said that, they know the boundaries as well... they know what penalties they will incur if the noise level gets too high or they are out of their chairs or not doing their work'. **(T6)**
- 'I like my classroom to be run like a modern version of a Victorian style (laughs). I like my kids to be attentive, to listen. I like them to realise that I have got something that I can give to them and they need to listen, to practise... they need to do what is asked of them and then they'll be able to do it. **(T7)**
- 'I really feel that I turned it (a difficult class) around... made them feel that they could achieve something. Even at their level, there was a lot to enjoy in learning... children in that maths group who started listening more and started producing the work much more and being... much more on task in their lessons'. **(T8)**
- 'I try to make it explicit to the children what I expect of their behaviour and what I expect in class and in the school. I try to make it as clear as possible that I do like the children to feel comfortable and happy in school, you know, not to feel upset or unhappy with what they're doing. Sometimes it goes wrong. **(T10)**
- 'I think my style is changing a little bit, I think I'm quite relaxed in the class... Sometimes you can go in and have a joke and sometimes it's just like you stamp down on things. I think I want personally to get a more consistent approach in the class so they know where they are every day'. **(T11)**

While there was clearly a variety in this range of perspectives and voices, articulating views about individual beliefs and preferences, a common theme emerged: again, the strong association between pedagogy and control. Moreover, there was a pattern in these responses that suggested these teachers worked very much within this prevailing authoritarian discourse, accepting much without any real sense of critique about what is contained within the mandated 'readerly texts' of official policy (Ball and Bowe 1992), as discussed earlier.

Having worked as a class teacher myself for several years, it would be misguided to ignore the reasons for these preoccupations among teachers. We hear much in the media about declining values in society among young people and there are many examples of teachers facing an almost impossible task in coping with some pupils. However, this is not intended to judge these teachers for seeking to find the right path, between themselves as individuals on the one hand and, on the other, as workers situated within an increasingly mandated occupational world. For, according to Barnett (1997:141): 'The key challenge of modern professionalism is... in trying to make sense of disparate discourses in one's professional actions'.

What is of key interest in the context of this research is a) the effect of competing systemic demands and personal inclinations and b) the extent to which teachers are aware that these processes may be influencing their thinking. It relates to the possibility that broader professional and cultural



changes (Hargreaves 1994), and personal tensions or stress brought on by these changes (Troman and Woods 2001), may be contributing to the subjugation of greater independent thinking, relegating it to that 'Dark Side of the Moon' of a teacher's professional consciousness.

The remarks made by respondents above do, indeed, seem to imply a clash between a popularly claimed caring and dialogical educational discourse and what may appear as a rather authoritarian one. Such a rift between a politically imposed self-critical and self-evaluating culture in schools (Harland 1996) and a personal calling that may be at odds with it - in which children are seen as constant challenge to a teacher's idea of pedagogical order - make a compelling case for viewing this disparity as a contributory factor in leading some teachers into a form of occupational schizophrenia.

A preoccupation with a professional form of 'tough love' towards pupils might be entirely understandable in view of the extent to which a teacher's performance is permanently under review, both by school management and through processes such as Ofsted inspection. This insistence on control is related to a preoccupation with the importance of being *in* control and an awareness that one is being watched (Moore 2004). It also reveals a certain professional insecurity. This idea is expressed in teachers' statements about how and why they worked in the manner they chose:

'I think that things here are really structured... talking about the three part lesson for instance. What's wrong with doing one thing and getting stuck into that? Sometimes I think you're restricted in a sense... the lessons are restricted to a three part lesson - you've got your instructions, your main activity and your plenary. It's the same with English. To me it is good, but I myself don't like

myself going over time at the end, you know, I generally believe that it's a problem'. (T12)

This teacher was not alone in expressing disquiet about competing professional and personal preferences. She, like others interviewed, appeared to be positioned within and between seemingly opposing discourses, at once accepting and yet rejecting some aspects of common practice in the school. It was fascinating to note that these teachers gradually revealed more of themselves in interview, self-consciously reflecting on the experience of being pressed on these matters which encouraged a kind of critical self-evaluation in action. For example, one teacher interviewed began to question the whole notion of the validity of Ofsted inspection, as it were, during the interview itself. This interesting sense of professional dilemma emerged *after* she had initially given considerable support for the benefits of the evaluation of her practice, even under the scrutiny of an inspector:

'I think with Ofsted coming in, teachers tend to put on a show...[N]ot a show, no wrong word... um... knowing that they are being observed, would do things in a different way, so I suppose yes, in a way, it is a show isn't it? I suppose it gives a false impression of what they normally do, because you couldn't maintain that level of practice all of the time, every day, in every single lesson. I think it would be impossible... I'm not saying that we don't do our jobs properly, but to maintain that element of what the inspectors want all day, every day, I don't think would be an achievable goal'. (T1)

For these teachers, establishing order in the classroom satisfied the mandate implied by the normative discourse for which these teachers felt they were required to play a part. I am speculating that these competing influences in the classroom may lead to a suppression of personal action and thinking, along with a commensurate alignment with institutional and systemic norms.

The cumulative effect of this tension and its ensuing defensiveness could contribute to misrecognising the discursive influences that drive a teacher's professional perspective and practice. It may, indeed, have caused them to misrecognise these influences as practices that promote 'active learning' when, perhaps, they are less pupil-focused than this model implies, instead basing their work more on received and officially sanctioned professional wisdom. For some teachers the pressure to balance these demands required them to make pedagogical compromises:

'What I like to think I do is for the bulk of children, those who can work in the way that I want them to work... and then maybe allowances are made for those other children... Still, even with those other children, I think I still try to impose that sense of, you know, you must stop, you must listen, you must work, you must do what you're told to do when you are told to do it.' (T7)

For this teacher (and others referred to below) it seemed that the inescapably pluralistic nature of public education meant that the good of the group took precedence over the good of individuals, despite politically influenced mantras about inclusion. Pupils who, for whatever reason, performed outside expected parameters effectively became the 'lost sheep' on the landscape of teaching. This feeling could be putting pressure on teachers to cope with these 'difficult children... to bring them back in' (T8) to the 'fold' of normal behaviour and *norma-tive* academic attainment. It is a responsibility that seems to weigh heavily on a teacher's conscience and may intensify a desire to temper a teacher's 'own individual practice that makes for the common good' (T13).

What might be seen as a communising and content-orientated notion of learning has its foundation firmly in a discourse of pragmatism and within the precepts of

what is called the 'common sense' approach (Norris 1998). It is not difficult to agree, therefore, that the systemic constraints within which schools and teachers work means that a common sense approach inevitably uses bureaucratic processes as a levelling device to encourage institutional compliance and a consensus about what 'standards' are.

My intention here is not to dismiss the professional efficacy of these principles, since I can also see real value in operating a school professionally and in an organisationally 'slick' manner; learning how to cope with, and to negotiate, my own occupational trajectory has shown me this. Rather, it is to note a real sense that some teachers may have of a discord between officially mandated practices and personal preferences. This is something causing tension for such teachers, being subjected to various forms of institutional compliance and yet having to find their own professional pathway between competing and occasionally contradictory discourses (Moore 2004:19).

Perhaps, it is in balancing anticipated demands for a universalised and reified style of good practice with personal preferences and inclinations that these teachers negotiate their own professional pathways? Whatever their degree of consciousness in determining this pathway, these teachers suggested in interview, by their claimed motivations and values, that they actively seek professional 'order' to make sense of their occupational world. This preoccupation could also lead teachers to fear its professional antithesis - chaos - mainly because loss of control is pedagogically frowned upon through implied institutional policy and mechanisms for evaluating performance. These

mechanisms - Foucault's (1979) theoretically relevant *moral technologies* translated here into systems of school evaluation - clearly do exert a powerful influence on teachers. In the course of this struggle, these teachers contend with a high level of mistrust and accountability, whilst enduring levels of professional surveillance few occupational groups ever experience. These two powerful influences in teachers' occupational lives also emerged as prominent themes in the interviews. Coupled with a clarion call for teachers to demonstrate and espouse a universalised good practice, dealing with constant scrutiny from bodies like Ofsted, as well as from local authority and institutional managers, means that the highly and increasingly intensified work of teachers (Norris 1998) may contribute to a phenomenon whereby they talk about, and reflect upon, their work *ad nauseam*. Some may do so to such an extent, that the ideological basis of these discussions is either blurred or even misrecognised.

### **Professional Trust and Surveillance, or, 'The Gaze of the Other'**

Whether teachers like it or not, their work is under constant scrutiny (Sandbrook 1996). It is under scrutiny both by colleagues and managers at institutional level and at the levels of local and central government too (Willms 1992). Being watched is often considered as an essential element of school improvement (Cullingford 1999), although there is also a vociferous alternative argument that only self-imposed means of *self-evaluation* effect any real improvement or contribute to forms of proactive professionalism among teachers leading to success (Earley 1996; Macbeath 1999). As expected, teachers interviewed did

not comment directly on their perceived intellectual positions - between the extremes of complete ideological domination and the possibility for genuine freedom to develop their professionalism - since the oblique interview method adopted was more subtle. However, it was fascinating to try to understand teachers' perceptions about what might be seen as a central dichotomy in their work: these feelings of professional trust and responsibility, from one point of view, with a perennial awareness - and in some cases fear (Troman and Woods 2001) - of the surveillance of their work in school from another.

Are these possibilities mutually exclusive, or is there another explanation for what at first appears to be an occupational anathema? Whatever the case, teachers and teaching are not alone in having to face up to a re-alignment in terms of what it means to be a 'professional', suggesting that recent arguments about the struggle of different occupational groups to retain or develop 'cultural capital' (Hanlon 1998) may no longer apply in a post-modern, technicist world in which teachers - like others - are seen in a purely utilitarian manner as being educational 'experts for hire' (Apple 1979). 'Expertise' is a concept in a state of constant flux, however, and the teachers interviewed had some interesting ideas about this and the ways in which their expertise is, and should, be defined and regulated. Indeed, the teachers made frequent comments about being scrutinised. This preoccupation among them called to mind what Zizek (1989), albeit in a different context, refers to as *the Gaze of the Other*: this was an interesting theoretical framework in which to cast some light on the data here and I return to Zizek's theory later on. This awareness on their part was not without its ambivalence, though. It seems as if these teachers at once felt

discomfort from the gaze of others upon their professional activities, yet are so used, and conditioned, to it that being constantly scrutinised was commonly interpreted more as somebody 'to watch over them' (T1), especially at the level of the school as institution:

'I think in a way people do need somebody, um, on their case, not on their case, it's the wrong word but people do need other people to watch over them, to make sure they are doing the things that they should be doing'. (T1)

This teacher was not alone in making remarks about mixed feelings relating to 'being watched', whilst wanting peer group approval and the headteacher's approbation for the quality of her work at the same time. Her comments were also interesting in terms of this study since they hinted that this teacher had adopted a psychologically defended position. It emerged in other comments suggesting the need for surveillance and correction, yet with a simultaneous desire to be left alone:

'I suppose it keeps you on your toes in a way, there is that... it's my class and I just want to get on with it. The observations can sometimes be an invasion of your own practice and it's good in some respects but not good in other respects. I just feel that as qualified teachers we should be allowed to get on with the job. Yes, I suppose you have to have that element of watching like all professions nowadays have elements of being observed in what they do. I was [observed] when I was doing something else and I suppose that if you aren't doing your job properly they can bring you into line. But I also think it's an invasion of your own practice.'  
(T1)

The tentativeness with which this teacher exercised her professional licence was echoed by others. It is interesting to note that Moore (2004) noticed a distinction (with student teachers) between welcomed 'pairs of eyes and ears', which were usually self-selected, and a less welcome 'surveillant gaze'. The ambivalence contained in the teacher's comments just quoted, seems to

represent something else again. Mostly, these teachers attributed their awareness of overt forms of the control of their working practices to school management, represented by staff members who 'keep you on your toes' (T1) at a local level within the context of each school, and the ever-present sanction available to Ofsted: to 'put a failing school into special measures' (T4).

It was surprising, though, just how much of the gaze of others was perceived to be from within the family, so to speak. One teacher commented, when asked about what it was that influenced the way he worked in school, that: 'I think it's just general. How other teachers in the school perceive how you're doing your job' (T4). This realisation on the part of teachers is hardly surprising when an increase in bureaucratic structures and ubiquitous policy-making in schools (Hargreaves and Goodson 1996) is considered alongside pressures to comply with institutional norms. It has been suggested that it leads to feelings among teachers that professional freedoms are merely 'persuasive rhetorics of professionalisation [which are] all too often accompanied by conditions where professionalisation is actually being dismantled' (*ibid.*, p.3). Indeed, these teachers, in their varying degrees of professional self-consciousness, seemed to have a need for structures and control almost as a prerequisite for competency, perhaps since many of them had been trained as teachers from within this competency, or skills-orientated, paradigm of initial training (Eraut 1992):

'Some parts of the job are quite frustrating and annoy me... mostly it's to do with the pressure that's put on you that you have to achieve certain things. I mean particularly in Year 6 you've got to achieve certain levels, so you are set a target and it's kind of said to you that's what you must do... I suppose that comes down from the hierarchy of the school, down from the governors,



from the Headteacher and the Senior Management Team. I mean the school does perform at a particular level and you do feel the pressure to keep those levels up, to keep those standards up. It's very easy for people to say, well it's not just you it's more about the school as a whole. You don't feel that though when you're there, you feel that eyes are on you. Now when those SATs results are announced, you can almost feel other people's eyes on you and you feel, kind of, that if certain standards aren't reached...if those standards aren't reached, then people are going to be looking at you'. (T7)

These comments were revealing. This teacher at once responded to, and recoiled from, the ambivalence she felt in being given great personal responsibility 'to keep those levels up', yet expressed a clear and unabashed 'annoyance' with the system she promoted through her work. The tangible feeling of 'other people's eyes on you' she exposed in herself, while functioning perfectly well within a world of ambivalence. This type of contingent positioning resonates with theories of the 'self' in occupational space (Davies and Harre 1990) and reminds us in this context of the vocational mandate towards which teachers are powerfully propelled (Britzman 1998). The anxiety contained in some of these teachers' comments can also be understood by recalling Zizek's (1989:113) incantation after Lacan, 'Che vuoi?'; meaning, what do you want (of me) as teacher and professional? Much of the tension perceived by respondents stemmed from their ideas about what the notion of 'standards' meant; their self-conceptions of being a trustworthy professional were mainly based on standards - both nationally set and institutionally defined - which were upheld by individuals. The scrutiny and 'watching' of their work performed the role of sentinel in guarding standards as benchmarks of acceptability and success, however arbitrary standards might be considered to be. As another teacher remarked:

'In my opinion there are a couple of ways of looking at it: you've got the National Curriculum attainment standards, where the children need to be at a certain level... and then professional standards I guess... what the government would like the child to be and... trying to get the best fit in terms of the attainment targets, the most that they can do for their ability'. (T6)

These teachers regarded bureaucratic controls, school management and the external evaluation of their work as a double-edged fact of occupational life. While some bemoaned interference from agencies such as Ofsted (nobody said they ever found inspection pleasant, of course), others seemed to adopt a more acquiescent attitude towards something over which they had no control. Indeed, there was even a sense among some that, professionally, teachers should not 'bite the hand' that feeds their professional identity and its association with standards through official sanctioning by inspection, for example. The ambivalence towards official bodies like Ofsted was striking if the punitive power inherent in its role as inspector of the competency of schools and of individual teachers is contrasted with the feeling expressed by some teachers of the vindication of their ability to uphold those standards. This could be achieved through this nonetheless painful process of being assessed periodically by Ofsted, as well as by being constantly evaluated by school management. In addition to having the power to censure the wayward or maverick staff member, frequent scrutiny was also seen to offer a form of *tough love* and protection:

'You do need a good team at the top... It's like dominoes I suppose, it all branches down to the rest. Therefore, if you've got a strong team at the top you'll find that everybody else becomes, um, better... [I]f you've got a weak team at the top, a weak senior management, a weak headteacher, then the rest of the staff have got nothing to look up to. But if you've got a strong management team and head then you think, alright, they are good at their jobs... it's this big umbrella and everybody underneath it is working as they should be, together'. (T1)

These comments are clearly attuned to managerialist and bureaucratic school structures. Being competent, both from one's own perspective *and* from those of others, implied an inherent acceptance of surveillance and self-policing, albeit by managers whom teachers 'look up to' (T1). These teachers did not view this extant feature of their occupational lives as implying a lack of professional trust, nor as a deficit model of what it might mean to be a trusted professional. As a familiar and largely unquestioned part of their professional landscape, through discursive practices into which individuals are inextricably *woven* (Foucault 1979), my point here is that teachers could be considered as subjects who are ideologically institutionalised:

'[S]trategic action colonising the communicative structures of the teachers' lifeworld... Management is about the subjugation of bodies; it is essentially a disciplinary power'. (Wilcox and Gray 1996:132)

While not painfully felt by the individuals who took part, the consistency with which these teachers acquiesced intellectually, to notions of evaluation, censure and control, was quite startling. It gives some credence to the speculation that these teachers misrecognised not just the ideological origins from which much of their occupational experience is derived, but also the more immediate ideological assumptions that may either underpin or, worse, undermine their work in practice. Again, the data can be understood more clearly by adopting Foucault's (1979:147) use of Bentham's metaphor of the 'Panopticon' in this context as a *mechanism of observation*; 'to arrange things so that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in action'. For my colleagues, then, evaluation had become an omnipresent means of control, whoever carried out that evaluation. This implied the need

for a panoptic 'gaze' of others, both for permanent vindication that standards were being met and to maintain a teacher's ideologically supplied license to practise in an acceptable manner, within prevailing educational discourses. This idea clearly emerged during the interviews. For example, another teacher commented:

'I think there was such a difference in teaching maths and English at school that they needed a baseline for teachers to use. Some schools were excellent, some schools were not achieving what they should and the overall level for Year 6 was very poor, so the government wanted to increase the standards and hence the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies'. (T6)

The implication is that if teachers, who for so long had such pedagogical freedom, could not raise academic achievement through their work autonomously, then there was a need for an imposed agenda by central government.

According to this model of professional identity, senior school staff acted conspicuously as managers and they ensured, unequivocally, that staff carried out the official mandate, through school policy and bureaucratic processes. That some teachers appeared not to reflect critically on this facet of occupational life is hardly surprising, in the light of the steady intensification of their work, acting as a kind of smokescreen for messier debates about pedagogy and school organisation that teachers now face in the United Kingdom and beyond it (Fullan 2001). One of those interviewed made explicit reference to what he saw as a trend towards anti-intellectualism among teachers and this attitude is echoed, too, by those such as Becher (1989) in the suggestion that 'soft', social-scientific pursuits like teaching attract low cultural

capital partly through their lack of intellectual and ideological independence, compared with the older professions. Put another way:

‘When we look at teaching as lived experience and work, we often find that seductive rhetorics of change pronounced in policy, break down into cynical, contradictory or resistant voices within the lives of teachers themselves’. (Hargreaves and Goodson 1996:22)

When faced with these contradictory and resistant voices, teachers may feel compelled to adopt the pragmatic turn (Moore et al. 2002a) in dealing with multiple demands and multiple tensions in their working practices. One very experienced colleague commented that:

‘Teachers are pragmatists and you have to play the game. I’m not sure whether Ofsted is moving teaching away from professionalism as all professions are subject to some form of external inspection and control or regulation, in medicine more and more so than us... The more you talk about it, the more you are likely to convince me that Ofsted has actually exalted the profession. The shared language and shared beliefs promoted by Ofsted, or whatever, the National Curriculum, the whole movement since the late 1980s has actually brought about a body of knowledge that we didn’t have. I can remember discussing as a student in the 1960s why teaching wasn’t really a profession, and one of the reasons was that we didn’t have a shared set of beliefs or a body of knowledge, among other things’. (T2)

His point was that professional collectivism, whatever its genesis, lies at the heart of a professional body of knowledge, the corpus of which teachers are both immersed in and charged *with* to enact in their roles. This view is a predictable one, coming as it did from a school manager’s perspective. What is interesting is the alternative scenario, echoed by others, of a professional vacuum where an officially mandated body of professional practice is absent, as it was suggested was the case in the past. Whether practice equates with knowledge is another matter and the ambivalent yet broadly acquiescent

attitudes espoused by these teachers towards being watched was a theme that permeated all of the interviews. Most of these teachers both accepted a universalised interpretation of a common set of educational and professional standards, believing they understood the purpose of, and value in, external evaluation, yet responded in a defensive, and in some cases even aggressive, emotional manner towards these processes. This is another example of the professional consciousness of teachers being separated from a reality that bears little thinking about, such are the potential consequences. The main object of their fear was, of course, Ofsted inspection. One teacher spoke in detail about why he felt he was exposed to these anxiety-inducing experiences:

'I'd imagine from my knowledge of educational developments and the history of it that from a political point of view... we had a few years ago the fact that there were 15,000 or whatever unsatisfactory teachers, and I think it's probably... I don't know it was knee-jerk, but there was an element of reaction with regard to that. I'd imagine that those in 'head office', as it were, and perhaps civil servants within the DfES were responding to these statements about unsatisfactory teachers and, you know, that was an element of the motivation behind it...Um, (laughs) although I think to be honest they're [inspections] awful really. I think in terms of the pressure it puts onto a teacher and just the onus on the teacher to perform as it were for that lesson. I think it's an unfair system and in many respects I think a negative system from the point of view of the stresses and the anguish... I'd say it doesn't give a fair estimation of a teacher's ability'. (T2)

Discussions in the interviews showed a surprising acceptance of centrally imposed notions of 'standards' while some teachers felt the value in being scrutinised, however painfully, in order to be able to demonstrate that they were promoting legitimised standards:

T3: This is what Ofsted came in to do, supposedly.  
Int: To do what?  
T3: To give everybody better standards. Everybody starting off from the same point, making sure all of us are being

true to the children we teach, not just leaving them... In one way it helped to improve all schools.

The double-edged sword of Ofsted inspection was seen as something with which a teacher simply had to contend. This was necessary, this teacher implied, if the inspection process - the great leveller - was to ensure that standards were both established and maintained. This teacher did not feel that inspection had fundamentally changed her practice, although she, like others, did have to concede that the experience of having to perform for others during inspections did act as a major source of professional self-examination, despite not recognising, or *misrecognising*, the source of these influences. As she said:

‘I don’t think it has influenced me... but if there are things that I haven’t done and they have pointed them out, then I do that, for my own development. I make sure that the next time they come it will be done. I try to do that and in that way they are influencing me, because I’d like to know that the school has got a good result and that when I am being observed I have been adequate enough’. (T3)

This view was expressed differently by all of those interviewed, in spite of their obvious preoccupation with ‘putting on a show’ for the inspectors (T9). That this preoccupation could persist without any deeper ramifications for the way respondents regarded themselves and their pedagogical values seemed unlikely, if the insistence with which they alluded to inspection as a ‘disciplinary power’ (Wilcox and Gray 1996) is taken into account. Rather, for some, Ofsted-approved classroom practices became an idealised set of best practices that teachers could either aspire to or emulate. There was even the suggestion by one respondent that inspection brought out the best in a teacher’s ability to be a ‘good teacher’ as a projected form of ideal - yet unsustainable - practice:

'I think all Ofsted serves is to make people feel even more under pressure to do the things they know they *should be doing* anyway. They make people put on *performances* for that week, and I know what I should be doing and I've said already I know the *level of thought that should* go into planning and how to use a range of resources. So the fact that Ofsted comes in just makes me for that week spend every hour doing that just for them, to put a tick in the box... The alternative is that you still put a high level of thought and effort into your planning but the frustrating part of teaching is that you can't always do things the way you know you could, because time doesn't allow it and you just have to learn to cope with the feeling that *I'm not doing all that could be done* but I'm doing the best I can with the time I have... I think I still do a really good job with that view but I'm just aware that I could do even more.' (T8, my emphasis)

What this respondent seemed to be saying is that only *in extremis*, under the close scrutiny of 'the Other' in the form of an Ofsted inspection, could she perform at her pedagogical best. She echoed another common preoccupation among teachers - one of work intensification. She aspired to maintain the level at which she could perform, but felt this to be unrealistic. Implicit in her comments was an assumption that Ofsted-preferred models of teaching and learning are intrinsically valid and that, provided she was able to demonstrate competency in applying them when under the microscope of inspection, this would have vindicated her practice and ability as a teacher. Her practice, as for others interviewed, was essentially occupational practice based on contingency. Comments made by others, understandably, revealed similar preoccupations with professional survival:

- 'Ofsted is there to check how you are running the school and you would assume they would feed-back to, say, the borough, about what the school is like and to check that schools are doing the things as they should be done... If Ofsted walked in tomorrow there would be an honest view of the school, if they just walked in unannounced, and I think that the preparation that schools do doesn't give a true picture'. (T10)



- ‘It (a poor inspection report) would reflect on me and on the school as well... it’s all a game really isn’t it, you know you have to do what Ofsted want you to do or you get a bad report’. **(T11)**
- ‘The impression I have got from other people is that it’s a time when everything is scrutinised... I don’t even know any schools that have been inspected but I think it might help them to improve’. **(T12)**
- ‘One of the first questions you ask is what do they want to see?... As soon as you manage to clarify what any individual Ofsted team wants to see, then you teach to that and make sure they see it. That’s part of our professional agenda. You know, do they want to see a three-part lesson, do they want to see an integrated day... Nobody, no teacher, wants to be labelled a failure.’ **(T13)**

It was hardly a surprise that these teachers expressed similar opinions, albeit with different styles and levels of assertiveness, working as they did within a demonstrably cohesive institutional context, and being immersed in both a strong staff culture and mandated school policy. However, personal experiences of being inspected in this school had been mixed and this affected each teacher’s attitude towards the value of it. Whereas teacher 8 above had, she suggested, gained Ofsted’s stamp of approval, others had been less fortunate in securing the same response. Some had not experienced inspection at all and had only a vague, and rather naïve, belief that the process had any intrinsic developmental value for them. However, all these experiences invoked a similar attitude in these teachers: inspection affirmed an idealised form of good practice (whether legitimate or not) and the ‘game’ was to withstand this scrutiny, for both personal and school survival:

‘Inspectors don’t and can’t have a good feel for what is going on, not in a few days. They are being shown set lessons and there is such pressure on the teachers that they don’t perform anything like their normal selves and I don’t think it is very helpful, to be

quite honest with you... People have already gone through hoops to show that they are competent teachers. They have gone through all sorts of people sitting in their lessons and whatever and if we want competent teachers we don't really need Ofsted to come and find out. But if you are going to come into a lesson where there are a range of difficulties and the teacher herself or himself is not fully at ease... then they are not going to see a very good lesson. So what is that going to tell them? It's going to tell them that the teacher is not at ease in that lesson... I can only speak for myself and I find it very stressful. Very stressful. And I've found it worse as it has gone on... I became exceedingly wary of the whole thing and I just found as the second one came along I got through that and the third one came along and I found that absolutely onerous. I did have a very difficult class at the time and I found that very, very stressful, so I don't know I just find it very... I just think it's false, you know'. (T9)

There can be little doubt that undergoing inspection and being watched in an evaluative context is underestimated by no-one (Brent and Ellison 1994; West 1998) and is cripplingly traumatic for some (Troman and Woods 2001), although there still remained a common thread among these teachers of acceptance, albeit sometimes begrudgingly, of practices approved by Ofsted. While each individual adopted a range of different strategies to cope with challenging professional experiences such as these (Pollard 1982; Jeffrey and Woods 1998), there was a strikingly similar and *uncritical* acceptance of the ideological basis of approved pedagogical approaches promoted by Ofsted as described by these teachers. This seemed to be the case despite their qualms about the questionable methodology employed by Ofsted itself (Richards 2001) in making seemingly incontrovertible and non-negotiable judgements about individual performances, and through which individuals are inevitably compared - and ranked - alongside each other (Gibbins 1995). Through the whiteout effect caused by anxiety, alongside an effort to win official approval, these teachers suggested that their actions and reactions to experiences like being

inspected came to promote idealised institutional norms and imperatives. This, I am suggesting again, encourages limited forms of professional thinking and contributes to the possibility of the misrecognising professional as a *deficit* model of the teacher (Keddie 1973), and one being posited here in this particular sense.

It did become apparent during the interviews that these teachers often worked within disparate, and at times opposing, educational discourses that did not comfortably fit with their own professional preferences. This kind of professional eclecticism has been noted by others too:

'Discourses do not exist in isolation but within a larger system of sometimes opposing, contradictory, contending or merely different discourses... There are dynamic relations between these (discourses) which ensure continuous shifts and movement, progression or withdrawal in certain areas... In the colonisation of areas of social life, discourses attempt to reconcile contradictions, mismatches, disjunctions and discontinuities within that domain by making that which is social seem natural and that which is problematic seem obvious... The accounts provided within one discourse become not only unchallenged, but unchallengeable, as 'common sense'... which allows no room for thought: the social will have been turned into the natural'. (Kress 1989:7-10)

These teachers expressed the contingent nature of working within the state of permanent professional flux that Kress (1989) describes, while being relatively powerless to effect changes they might like to see in particular aspects of daily occupational life. Ultimately, they appeared to be simultaneously aware of the overriding influence of others (through this omnipresent 'gaze') while being subjected to these non-consensual tools of evaluation as supplicating and, in a few cases, as traumatised individuals (Troman and Woods 2001). The relationship for teachers between the nature of this 'watching' and Foucault's

(1979) notions of self-surveillance became apparent when these key theoretical perspectives were considered in relation to the interview data: this issue is discussed in the next section, when teachers are portrayed as psychologically defended workers.

It could be that the intensity with which prevailing discourses become so prevalent consumes teachers with task-oriented imperatives that they misrecognise as complicated and challenging professional activities. However, the misrecognition, here, may be seen as based more on ideological assumptions which were passed off as a teacher's own particular, self-derived perspective:

'It's also about not reinventing the wheel; taking a framework... and then making it ours, not just copying, but making it ours. Now, where that original framework comes from, god only knows, but that's the way I would do it: pick up a framework. In any policy I would expect the aims and vision, the mechanics of a subject, and the resources needed... It's about guidance, with LEA advisers... I don't feel that we can close ourselves off as an isolated community and say we are school X, we have been trained and we know what we are doing. There is a lot of good training and information that is coming forward to help co-ordinators move thinking forward. Now, whether we adopt it or not doesn't matter, but we have the chance to listen and take things forward. We have to be selective as well; we can't suddenly send out ten co-ordinators on various courses and then have ten types of change though'. **(T13)**

Whether or not basing classroom practices on received wisdom from Ofsted, local authority advisers, school colleagues (or from other sources) actually contributes to a form of professional misrecognition is, frankly, a difficult question to answer. The implication from the snapshots of the views of these teachers - naively perhaps that 'government knows best' - encourages us to speculate whether teachers, rather than becoming *re*-professionalised as

Teacher 13 implied, are in effect becoming *de*-professionalised or re-orientated. This could be due to the intellectual inertia caused, misrecognised as meaningful professional 'reflection' (Schon 1978) as teachers cope with being scrutinised. These tensions are bound to have an inevitable psychological effect on teachers, whatever their own coping strategies. This idea presents the interesting possibility that teachers can be seen as being psychologically defended (Chamberlayne 2000) by suppressing or by 'splitting off' uniquely personal ideas and forms of practices from safer, more acceptable practices that have a subtle ideological origin. Indeed, the teachers interviewed hinted at this as a possibility in their often ambivalent attitudes towards their working practices. Taking the least line of resistance as contingent pragmatists and by accepting 'the devil you know' in the form of prevailing pedagogical preferences, and by uncritically following a 'common sense' normative professional discourse (Kress 1989), these teachers may have been adopting attitudes that relegated more independent professional thinking to hidden depths. Under these circumstances, teachers might misrecognise their consciously stated attitudes for those that have become etched in their subconscious minds through the discourses by which they are absorbed. This is a possibility explored through an examination of the interview data next.

### **Better the devil you know: teachers as psychologically defended subjects**

All of the teachers in this study articulated their professional practices and the reasons underlying them in what seemed to be a convincing and authentic manner. This, of course, on the face of things just represents my own

perception as colleague and researcher, although the transcribed interviews do provide a faithful record of what was said by each respondent. As expected, some teachers were more explicit than others in expressing complicated ideas about their work, and others were vociferous in asserting their preferred ways of working in the classroom whatever official school policy might suggest. One difficulty that could not be conveniently overcome, yet needed to be borne in mind, was how I could ever 'know' what the un-stated views of colleagues were. An awareness of this problematic methodological issue, however, recalls a principal reason for undertaking the research in the first place; that I was conscious of a difference between what teachers said about their work and what appeared to be happening in practice. As has been stated already, the tensions that might exist at a juncture between the two positions in teachers' minds were what I was interested to explore through the interviews. Much has been written about how researchers should, and do, interpret interviews, especially those predicated on an acknowledgement that these are essentially social encounters, in which the interviewer inevitably contributes to the interviewee's *construction* of a personal narrative (Keddie 1973; Hollway and Jefferson 2003).

Rather than looking for 'mined' data (Kvale 1996) relating to what motivates individuals to say what they do, as if it could be brought to the surface for analysis and explanation, an appreciation of the complex psychological dimension to teachers' stories as 'defended' was achieved by looking at the interviews across one another. In other words, I was interested to examine points of contradiction (as well as similarity) and to avoid taking these stories

necessarily at face value, while respecting the respondents as colleagues with whom I shared this essentially social encounter: see Keddie's (1971) research.

The interview data threw up some interesting ideas by teachers about their perceptions of their 'place' in the educational system. For the respondents, part of maintaining a teacher's sense of 'position' in the professional hierarchy was a general acceptance, alongside a range of what Pollard (1982) describes as 'coping strategies', that external evaluation is a fact of occupational life. As one teacher commented: 'You always feel that eyes are on you... I rise to pressure like that' (T7). The ambivalence with which these teachers often regarded the nature of this gaze upon their professional activities was a common theme throughout all of the interviews; it simultaneously offered support and the potential for censure. Another teacher said:

'Ofsted comes in and makes sure that the headteacher and the rest of his team are *doing the job properly*. They *identify* areas that *need* to be identified and need to be *put straight*.' (T1, my emphasis)

If we choose to interpret this comment using a Lacanian (1979:122) perspective, this teacher was born into a symbolic 'big Other' (itself reflected in the present system of education in this country) and anchored her professional conceptions upon - and within - the formal bureaucratic hierarchies that exist. Ofsted represents the apex of the hierarchy, while the headteacher is there to ensure that its mandates are carried out. If a teacher's professional misrecognition is based, therefore, on such obviously extrinsic influences, how can it be understood in terms of Foucault's (1979) notions of *self-surveillance*? From this perspective, the teacher was already pre-symbolically born into the

symbolic world (again, the 'big Other') of education. In turn, she had responded to extrinsic mandates by making sense of them through work-related motivations of fear and desire, reconciling these impulses to serve dominant discourses, which are much bigger than individual conceptions of the world, with her own unique intellectual understanding of the nature of her work as a teacher. The relationship between the individual (the teacher) and the symbolic order of things (institutionalised practices) is, therefore, not simply one-way. It is represented by a process of 'inter-subjectivity' (Kress 1989), in which individuals construct a sense of the social world around themselves, *but* the personal sense of which for individuals is mediated through overt forms of regulation - in this context Ofsted, local authorities, headteachers and governing bodies. So, in this sense, the gaze of the 'Other' should really be understood as the gaze of 'others' - including each other. Seen from a Foucauldian perspective, professional misrecognition arises out of the conflation of a deeply felt desire for official approval *and* the subjugation of broader independent occupational thought to the powerful vocational discourses which teachers are called to serve (Britzman 1991; 1998).

Since so much of what makes teachers and schools conventionally successful is dependent upon institutional and ideological watching by others, it makes sense to see the role of colleague-researcher as one that evokes all kinds of responses in individuals (including anxiety) and that these factors colour the outcome of the interviews. Moreover, it became central to this research to try to understand whether the impact of being under multiple surveillance and subjected to idealised models of 'the good teacher' (Moore 2004) embeds itself



so deeply in their psyches, that teachers are not aware of the condition of professional misrecognition to which it potentially gives rise.

The analytical approach adopted for this research has some relevance to psychoanalytic theories relating to interview data and their ability to provide an insight into the unconscious, but ostensibly transparent, impulses causing individuals to believe that what they say stems from an inner knowledge, rather than reflecting a received set of values and attitudes. Wengraf (2001) argues that researchers working within a paradigm that is highly personalised and open to charges of researcher delusion or 'reversion' (Beynon 1985) should be cautious in accepting at face value an analysis of interview data that suggests a self-knowledgeable and straightforwardly transparent self, as was noted above. This is important, we are told, since both researcher and interviewee are motivated *not to know* or to understand certain things (Chamberlayne et al. 2000), especially those professional issues that might prove uncomfortable to reconcile or to think searchingly about. Wengraf (2001) goes on to argue for the strength in locating the researcher in a context which is both relevant to, and as transparent as possible from, the perspectives of researchers themselves.

This position takes account of potential problems in ascribing too much literal credence to what colleagues told me in interview. It seems reasonable that, during an interview with a colleague in which that colleague is in all cases differently placed in the hierarchical structure of the school, mediating my own position as interviewer and colleague with people responding to questions that gave them a professional challenge was fraught with the possibility that the data might be exaggerated by teachers. This could have occurred for a variety of

reasons, including conflicting interests, as was identified also by Smith (1988). Mixed feelings about this uncustomary encounter could themselves have caused some anxiety in the teachers, although this was hard to determine. Combined with the uncharacteristic nature of this workplace interaction, the loosely structured interview schedule proved quite challenging for some and certainly invoked strong responses from others. Therefore, broaching potentially contentious and at the very least potentially stress-inducing professionally-related topics, meant that anxieties produced as a result would influence what interviewees said and how they responded. Indeed, if there was any doubt that some of the topics we discussed might provoke an emotional response in teachers, this misapprehension was soon dispelled when, for example, respondents were asked to talk specifically about their experiences of Ofsted inspection:

‘Ergghh... inspection? I think it’s one of those soul destroying things I think. How can someone come into school and give you a grade on one lesson, and you might be the most superb teacher ever. I think there’s far too much pressure on teachers and I don’t think it’s fair’. (T5).

The repugnance and trepidation felt by teachers towards Ofsted inspectors and the process of inspection itself was hardly a surprise. This uneasy, but critical, acceptance of the present system as a facet of occupational life continued though. Ofsted was seen to lack credibility:

‘... given its expensive record of demoralising the teaching force, lack of accountability and use of power without responsibility’ (NAHT 2005).

However, the range of comments made by teachers about the personal impact made on them by such experiences left me in no doubt that these critical

experiences colour the whole world of school teaching. The potential for attracting official opprobrium through inspection, as well as for personal vindication by it, was of key interest in this study. It became crucial to understand the extent to which working under threat of such extremes led teachers to develop their own coping strategies to deal with these potentialities. A pattern that became apparent throughout the interviews was that of linguistic 'coding', as Kress (1989:94) calls it, whereby teachers' uses of language in talking about teaching and learning suggested a certain codified, professional *lingo*. This was evident from the words and phrases abundant in all interviews: for example, 'standards'; legitimised practices; 'delivering lessons'; 'classroom management'; Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. It seemed that by using codified language the teachers displayed greater confidence that they were espousing and demonstrating 'good practice' during the interviews, and the safest option, perhaps, in a highly regulated and scrutinised occupational world. More than this, the very language the teachers used in defence of their professional positions gave them the pedagogical constructs upon which their work was based, much of it derived from received wisdom that, it is possible to conjecture, had been generated at a level of ideology from a limited set of intellectual possibilities. Again, Kress (1989) explains this phenomenon in terms of an 'agentive' nature characteristic in people to construct of their own meanings as learners through language in a highly complex social world. This theory of inter-subjective relationships between the self and society can also be applied to the context of teachers as workers positioned within a variety of discourses - often contradictory in nature - and the tensions this can cause as each teacher tries to make sense of a challenging occupational world in which

teachers seek the 'right path' by negotiating their way through discourses, partly by the very linguistic terms they use to describe and understand their work:

'[T]he final outcome is that [teachers too] are fully socialised into the rules, values and meanings of their social group, the path that they have taken in travelling there leaves them situated in quite a different way than they are in a theory which regards them as merely acquiring an existent system, or passively acquiescing in having a system imposed on them'. (Kress 1989:90)

To recap on an important point at the beginning, the manner in which these teachers were at pains to substantiate their views and practices meant that defensiveness featured as a discernible characteristic of their occupational lives, at least from what they disclosed or, I had wondered, chosen not to.

There are a number of theoretical frameworks (i.e. Hollway and Jefferson 2003; Klein 1988) that might be useful in trying to understand teachers as psychologically defended subjects for whom unpleasant or difficult aspects of the job are split as occupational aberrations from an otherwise idealised professional, or inner, self (Zizek 1989:105). It is evident from the interviews that these teachers achieved the difficult balancing act of mediating their own values and preferred practices through a variety of strategies to cope. This was a natural reaction to the occupational experience of having to respond to a variety of calls for them to inhabit complex, different and sometimes contradictory discourses. One teacher spoke plainly about her role in 'split' terms: she was at once the individual with her own educational values and beliefs, expressing a need for surveillance and correction, yet with a simultaneous and understandable desire to be left alone. She was in no doubt that she was required to work to an imposed agenda, based on nationally

measurable outcomes, for which there was always a fear of punitive action through the moral technology (Foucault 1979) of surveillance, through forces of managerialism (Ball 1999a) and through an ideology of power relations residing within the psyches of individuals (Boler 1999):

‘The government says children should reach a certain level by a certain age. I think teachers have certain standards themselves, knowing the children, and if they can achieve that level. I, as a Year X teacher, like to set levels for certain children. But, if the children don’t meet those levels or they can’t meet those levels or standards, whatever you want to call them, I can’t say I could be *blamed* for that I suppose’. (T1, my emphasis)

Opinions like this were revealing, both in terms of what was said and in the context of it being said in an interview with a colleague - me - who represents the management of the school. Psychoanalytic approaches to understanding both overt and tacit meanings derived from interviews are helpful in understanding this teacher’s interesting attitude about being ‘blamed’. By describing the strength of using psychoanalytic interpretations in interviews in which researcher and interviewee jointly construct a representation of reality through mediated linguistic conventions (Kress 1989), we can begin to appreciate a deeper anxiety in this teacher that, according to Chamberlayne et al. (2000:168), is:

‘...inherent in the human condition [in] that people’s actions, lives and relations with others are centrally influenced by the unconscious defences which we all deploy to cope with anxiety’.

This teacher also suggested in her polarisation of children’s conventional success, on the one hand, and the possibility for attracting opprobrium on the other, a ‘splitting’ of herself from this potentiality in her use of the term ‘blame’ and her refusal to accept it. I suggest that it leads to a defensive psychological position that anybody is likely to adopt, whether consciously or not, when faced

with problematic personal and occupational challenges or threats: we are all defended, all of the time. Such splitting allows the individual to retain a safe 'blame free' identity while the unpleasant feelings generated can be ascribed to an external source or cause. By doing so, they are running the risk of diluting or even negating the possibility for greater critical thought in an occupational sense, such is the power of compelling discourses among which teaching, ironically, becomes an anti-intellectual pursuit. Looking back to a passage quoted earlier, one very experienced colleague rather cynically remarked:

'I not sure teachers actually think that deeply, which sounds awfully snobbish. What people like me, in my position, are in danger of doing is attributing to teachers motives that they haven't got. Most of them come to work because that is what they do and they go home again and at the end of the day it's a job... I'm not sure how deeply a lot of teachers think about what they do. It may well be that this pragmatic business comes into it: that the way of getting the job done the best they can, with least aggro, is to follow the yellow brick road really. If you want to be creative, it's hard work and in fact, although I would say that teachers nowadays work a lot harder in many ways than I did, certain aspects of the job are a lot easier'. (T2)

Here, the teacher was being described as a 'blind' worker enacting a role, rather than as a 'reflective' professional (Schon 1978) with the ability to define and re-define the intellectual parameters of the task, or as truly 'reflexive' practitioners who are able to exercise a form of 'extended' or 'critical professionalism' (Barnett 1997).

With a cautious reference to one of Klein's (1998) psychoanalytic models to consider this possibility, being a teacher involves an acceptance of both good and bad experiences as being a part of lived reality, a reality that simultaneously fulfils and threatens the individual. However, according to Klein,

this position is difficult to achieve in a conscious and self-sustaining manner since it involves conflict between good and bad in an attempt to give precedence to what is good if, that is, a sense of reality and balance is to be maintained. In some of the interviews, as with Teacher 1 above, this tension was palpable in what was disclosed. The compulsion to preserve identity and to leave one's professional sanity intact could be encouraging teachers to suppress their consciously held beliefs and preferences in the classroom and to acquiesce to the overwhelming nature of official discourses. Prolonged pressure to conform intellectually and pedagogically can give rise to a deeper form of *repression*, perhaps in the sense intended by Freud (1968:454), and has its apotheosis, I want to argue, in professional misrecognition. It is doubtful whether generalisations such as the one expressed by Teacher 2, that teachers do not 'think', can be viewed as representative, although there is something in this polemicism that resonates with much of what was implied by a range of respondents, e.g:

'I think in many respects because of, for example, the QCA documents and the literacy strategy and the numeracy strategy, I know there are some really good elements in those. I think they give you a good focus in terms of what *skills you need to be teaching* the children. I think it has *taken away a lot*<sup>1</sup> in terms of *how the teacher should approach planning, how they should go about thinking* about how to develop and structure a scheme of work.' (T4, my emphasis).

The emphasis given to structures, guidelines, frameworks and the like was a feature throughout the research. These teachers, it appeared, needed to project their professional activity on to the discursive templates they had been given as tools of the trade; '... for the teachers to hang their hats on because somebody

else has made the decision about what to do for you' **(T2)**. The pervasive nature of a highly prescribed curriculum and favoured teaching strategies, enshrined in a plethora of official documentation and guidance, provided them with a compelling case to take the line of least resistance, and to comply, not just *pragmatically* (Moore et al. 2002a) but intellectually too. According to this proposition, teachers come to misrecognise official discourses as their own values and preferred pedagogical practices.

This perspective would acknowledge that teaching can be reduced to a commonly understood and executed series of activities. It is similar to what Hargreaves (1999) laments as mere 'practical' professionalism; that teaching is not a pluralistic activity based on unique contexts in which teaching and learning should dialogically be accomplished between teachers and pupils (Fairclough 1995); that it is, though, reducible to a series of universal, 'technicist' attributes, for example as contained in Brent (1994). This latter orientation is borne out by recent DfES definitions of teacher knowledge and skills as discrete and rarefied items on the training agenda. This teacher's (T6) use of terminology such as 'excellent', 'poor', 'standards' and 'strategies' is additionally interesting for two reasons: first, these linguistic terms are clearly 'industry standard' themselves, if the frequency of their use in other interviews is taken into account; second, according to Kress (1989:51), such terminology provides teachers with 'reading positions' by framing their values and practices within the parameters set by ideological discourses, as I discussed earlier in this section.



We can, therefore, see discursive dominance over linguistic habits as further contributing to the absorption of the teacher into a misrecognising ideological position, in which they replicate these values, partly perceived as their own, but having their origins elsewhere. As one teacher put it, with great self-awareness, albeit in a misrecognising sense I suggest:

‘I think our Teaching and Learning Policy is my way of doing things anyway, so I don’t feel I need to refer to it ... I know that the thoughts behind it are where I’m coming from in teaching anyway, so it is in there but in a more subconscious way’. (T7)

This perspective is quite distinct from a belief that teachers simply play the system to their own advantage. This teacher believed that her innate values were consistent with those inscribed in policy, and she could be right of course. However, the responses by these individuals to official demands cannot simply be explained as a vague vocational call-to-arms. Nor can they be attributed simply to the ‘contingent pragmatism’ (Richmond 2003) conceptualised in the pilot research with its focus on teachers’ reactions to Ofsted inspection. One of those in this study put it like this:

‘It’s a bit like the driving test isn’t it... you drive with hands at ten to two, not exceeding the speed limit, making sure you’re in the right gear. As soon as the test is over you drive the way you want to... that’s playing the game. I don’t think there’s any significance in that’. (T2)

In fact, some of those interviewed supported this assertion when asked to comment on their attitudes towards the value of Ofsted inspections. The murky depths of a teacher’s own, unique way of thinking about teaching and learning were obscured by a consuming desire to win official approval and ‘not to let the side down’ (T11) at times of institutional adversity. Another teacher commented:

'I actually think my lessons for Ofsted weren't me. It wasn't natural. It was just me following a script and afraid of being natural and of letting the lesson go the way I would normally do it.' (T5)

So, she *consciously* reflected on her experience of inspection as being a form of artificial practice - involving an active *suspension of disbelief* - and the performance practice that all teachers spoke of in both pilot and this research. This teacher also suggested later that her classroom practices were not tangibly altered in any fundamental way, despite the admission above. This apparent duality, or confusion even, could have arisen from the anxiety generated by the scrutiny of inspection and, possibly, have prevented her from understanding fully how much her practice and professional thinking was affected by the perennial gaze of others.

Britzman (1998) may provide a useful psychological insight into such disparities in teachers' stories, seen through the fragmented nature of teachers' professional lives. The ensuing anxiety as an intrinsic part of a teacher's professional existence can lead to 'the repression of [occupational] demands' (Britzman 1998:68) and, I am now suggesting, professional thinking which is to an extent misrecognised as being individual in its genesis but is ideologically derived. Again, Britzman (1998:36) argues that the combination of persistent professional anxiety and vocationalism often ascribed to teachers is:

'...[I]ntimately tied to, and provoked by, the structure of educational thought. The denials that sustain the fronts one puts up to evade anxiety are those that are... socially acceptable'.

In the personal contexts of these teachers at least, the socially acceptable face of teaching was often to take the least line of resistance and to comply with the

values implicit in fashionable classroom practices. It was also clear that they viewed these values as being enshrined in an acceptable form of good practice and misrecognised the limited scope for broader professional thinking that this restricted psychological state encouraged:

‘There are some things that I do that I wouldn’t necessarily have done before and I don’t see much point in doing, but I do it because I know that if we have another inspection it’s going to be expected of me... Let me think, um, I know something that I do that I really don’t see the point of and it’s when you’re marking children’s books and now I always write a comment on the work, but it’s not for anybody; it’s for parents at the end of the day and for Ofsted. I know what I’ve talked to the child about and the child knows too, and writing it down doesn’t help them, especially in my [infant] class... I do it because I know it’s expected when they look through books’. (T9)

Candid comments such as these may reveal, possibly to this teacher herself for the first time, the extent to which she is dominated by a pervasive ideology, whether based on consciously-held beliefs or not.

Like Britzman’s (1989; 1991) helpful psychoanalytical perspectives on challenging personal experiences in occupational settings (expressed in different ways by the teachers in this study too), another interesting perspective on these issues is offered by Žižek (1989) drawing, too, on the theories of Lacan (1979). Žižek discusses personal identity with its associated, and defined, professional persona. A distinction is made between ‘imaginary’ identification and ‘symbolic’ identification among individuals. The former represents an idealised and highly personal image of the way an individual likes to be seen; the latter places that individual identity within the context of the discursive order within which individuals are bounded, both through ideology, practice and even the language used to describe and, therefore, comprehend

the contextualised individual. In the case of the respondent quoted above, the individual is the teacher working within official discourses who may be misrecognising the source from which much of her occupational thinking stems.

As Žižek argues:

‘This mandate [to be a teacher] is ultimately always arbitrary: since its nature is performative, it cannot be accounted for by reference to the ‘real’ properties and capacities of the subject. So, loaded with this mandate, the subject is automatically confronted with a certain *Che vuoi?*, with a question of the Other. The Other is addressing him as if he himself possesses the answer to the question of why he has this mandate, but the question is, of course, unanswerable. The subject does not know why he is occupying this place in the symbolic network. His own answer to this *Che vuoi* of the Other can only be the hysterical question ‘Why am I what I’m supposed to be? Why have I this mandate? Why am I... [a teacher]?’ Briefly: ‘Why am I what you (the big Other) are saying that I am?’ (1989:113).

This complex passage really sums up what is the crux of the hypothesis to do with professional misrecognition in this study. I propose that, for these teachers, the undeniable *mandate* to follow prescribed ways of thinking about teaching and learning was to be found at a psychological juncture between individual notions of the ‘imaginary’ self (the teacher with intellectual choice) and the ‘symbolic’ self by responding to the official educational mandate. Using Žižek’s imagery of ‘the big Other’, we can conceptualise these teachers as being ‘born’ into an extant educational and discursive system, yet as malleable and ideologically naïve workers. The ensuing collision between the individual teacher and the pre-existing symbolic network, that we can understand as the professional arena of teaching, can be seen to absorb – or *colonise* – the teacher’s thinking, such is its overwhelming scale and intensity. Further, in responding to professional mandates based on officially sanctioned educational

discourses, individual opportunities for deeper or broader thinking outside these values are circumscribed by the gaze of Zizek's (1989) 'big Other'. It is the constant threat of this *gaze* and potential intervention by agents of this *Other* (e.g. Ofsted) that may lead teachers to misrecognise these ideological 'grand narratives' (Eisner 1985) for their own individual narratives about what it is to be a teacher. Indeed, from all of the interviews undertaken, there emerged an implication that these teachers - while knowingly complicit in a professional and political game - implied through their comments the persistent question '*Che vuoi*', when they were asked how they negotiated their own professional pathways:

'I rise to a pressure like that... although it frustrates me that I kind of feel that I have to reach to do certain things, it has to be done. I also like the challenge of it. I think, that's fine, if that's what they [Ofsted inspectors] want that's what they'll get'. (T7)

What might be seen as a deficit model of pedagogy or of professional identity had its rationalisation as a survival mechanism for a teacher like this. It was a form of 'cynical pragmatism' as one teacher (T2) put it, rather than the sincere pragmatism that distinguishes old hands from novices in teaching:

'I want to survive, they want to do the best they can, and there's a difference' (T2). This is an example of the contingent pragmatism, based on individual perspectives, evident from listening to teachers' stories and theorised in the earlier pilot work (Richmond 2003). In the classroom at grassroots level, this contingent pragmatism in individuals is, perhaps, driven by the undermining ideological effect of the constant question implied by the 'dirigiste' official policy-making (West 1998) of the DfES: 'Why am I what you are saying I am as a

teacher?', since practice seems to be based on ever-shifting pedagogical sands. One very experienced teacher made the following point:

'I think the real difference from when I started teaching and now, the really huge difference, is the amount of recorded work [pupils] are meant to do... Not so long ago when I started at this school in Year 3, if some of the less able children managed a sentence on their own, you were very happy, whereas now they are expecting children not only to write correctly but to attempt to write sentences on their own in Year 1. [Teachers] weren't ever expected to do that before'. (T9)

Adapting successfully to the perennially changing and sometimes cyclical nature of educational change, as Fullan (2001) has pointed out, became the very 'game' within the context of this study in which teachers were engaged. Some teachers clearly felt in control of their own pedagogical directions, despite pressure to conform to expected norms through processes like inspection. This position was tangibly adopted by four of those interviewed. At first, it seemed to confound my proposition about misrecognition. Two factors, however, seem to come into play here: the first is that individuals have their own narrative 'take' on professional activity and that these personal, yet professional perspectives (Barker and Johnson 1998), will be infinitely varied; second, I was interested not so much in people's opinions about how and why they work as they do, but wanted to tease out the degree of intellectual latitude with which they were able to think about their roles. This distinction is difficult to make in clear cut terms here, although it proved to be an advantage as an insider-researcher to know and understand the professional context as a participant. This privilege allowed me to contextualise the comments made by each respondent in terms of my own experience of observations of their own preferences and styles as teachers. As a result, I was able to make reasonable judgements about the

authenticity of statements made and to gauge the degree to which the social dynamic of the interviews led colleagues to tell me what they *thought* I wanted them to say and how they conceived of themselves: this process has a theoretical rationale by comparing their 'symbolic' identities with their 'imaginary' identities (Zizek 1989).

A good example of this narrative duality in the interviews was given by a relatively inexperienced teacher who had already developed enough self-assurance to describe his professional position quite assertively. However, it was doubtful whether there was any tangible difference between his 'routine' practice and his 'performance' practice based on my own knowledge of the school's highly systematised procedures in the classroom, which are, themselves, based on perceived examples of current 'good practice':

'[D]oing the three part [maths] lesson is something I've tried and I don't think it's the best way of doing it, just from my experience, and I know that it's set down that it's what an inspector is going to be looking for so when they come in that's what I would show them because I know that's what they want to see. But I think I would be more likely to stick to my convictions about the best way of doing things afterwards'. (T11)

This teacher spoke, also, of the constant pressure he felt under to maintain and develop certain standards. However, while most dismissed externally imposed standards mainly as political mechanisms for driving education, the same teachers often seemed to misrecognise these demands for their own, internalised values or standards, separating the two from each other:

'I put it all on myself because I think I have to get everything done and move on to the next thing. You feel that you have to cover everything.' (T12)

Under these intensified conditions there may have been little room for intellectual manoeuvre, let alone any scope for fully realised professional reflection in the optimistic manner implored by Schon (1978). With limited scope for real professional autonomy based on an intellectual mastery of teaching, these teachers were increasingly under pressure to capitulate or, at least, to reproduce aspects of practices currently in favour as their own. In the end, there was only one legitimated form of pedagogical practice; the mandated version. Ofsted inspection had become the dragon to be appeased through the sacrifice of unfortunate teachers, who were themselves 'othered' through the psychological act of splitting the good (me) from the bad (others), and a common anxiety among the respondents:

T5: What do you mean... Ofsted inspection?

Int: Well, do you think it's a good thing or a bad thing?

T5: I'd say it's a mixture... it gives good guidelines for teachers to base their work upon and to make sure they are doing the right thing in class... Without it, they would be all over the place.

Any critical scrutiny by respondents of Ofsted's value in providing an opportunity for genuine professional insight seemed limited to questions related to the wisdom some inspectors had allegedly lacked in coming to decent conclusions about an individual's performance. There was no example during the interviews of a teacher who rejected either the whole nature of the current inspection regime or questioned the legitimacy of its methodology (see, however, Earley et al. 1996; N.A.H.T. 2005). When pressed to talk about inspection experiences, these teachers understandably recounted the emotional effect of having the quality of one's work examined and revealed a preoccupation with parochial concerns, rather than offering any principled objection. This was something of



a surprise, although to be expected, perhaps, since the intellectually 'narrowing' effect of professional misrecognition, if it exists, must concentrate attention on the micro-context – the result of an ideologically overwhelming *macro blot* imposed from above (Bernstein 1996). One teacher's story illustrates this possibility well:

'My experience of Ofsted, luckily for me, was good. The only issue that I had during their inspection was in one particular lesson where an inspector watched a geography lesson and, see I'll never forget that lesson it's amazing really, it was to do with different parts of a river... and we looked at the parts, labelled them and talked about it and it was just a bog standard geography lesson. At the end, he said it was nice but it didn't sparkle. I went 'Pardon?'. I said, 'Well, what would you have done to make it 'sparkle'? He said, 'Oh I wouldn't have done anything differently, it was just one of those lessons that doesn't sparkle', but that was the comment that he felt he had to come up with. I probably spent the rest of the day muttering under my breath that I'd like to meet him in a dark alleyway somewhere but from that moment on I thought what can I do? I'll do the best I can do and this other person will come in and say what they think of my teaching, whether it's ok or poor. And that's their opinion. How much I value that opinion is another matter. You know someone like that coming back with a comment to me... I didn't value what he said from then on. As far as I was concerned he was nit-picking... He couldn't find anything he would do differently but he still couldn't tell me anything to move me forward. He actually observed me two more times: the second time I just sat and said thank you very much and the third time, when he asked, I declined any feedback. I thought I don't want it' (T7).

In accounting for the teacher's response, what at first appeared to represent a complete rejection of the inherent nature of inspection as a tool for evaluating 'good' teaching did not really amount to much more than a dismissal of an individual who could not recognise decent teaching when he saw it. Once this inspector failed to vindicate the teacher's style, the judgements made were dismissed and used as a basis for stone-walling further attempts by the

inspector to break into this teacher's professional identity. It is, of course, an understandable survival tactic to split off not just 'good' teaching from 'bad' teaching, but to separate the teacher from the inspection process, and to do so *solely in the personal domain* of the teacher's own 'life-world' (Ball and Bowe 1992).

It seems that this life-world was, for the teacher, effectively enclosed by politics and the discursive practices to which politics give rise. So immersed are teachers in prevailing versions of good practice that existence outside permitted orthodoxies becomes at best an unexplored professional fantasy. If we accept this possibility, then teachers come to inhabit a vocational version of the artificially contained bubble-world of Hollywood's movie 'The Truman Show' (1998), with its fake horizon that defined for the protagonist the boundary of a 'reality' which became false only once he realised it was false. Much the same could be said of teachers: they might not think deeply about, or be aware of, occupational realities beyond given discursive boundaries. According to such a view, Ofsted inspection becomes a major force in preserving the status quo of established orthodoxy, since inspection:

'...bring[s] a school into ever closer congruence with the Ofsted model of the school'. (*ibid.*, p.132)

Within this scenario, teaching becomes based on a complex and obfuscatory array of pedagogical platitudes which find their purpose in managerialist rationalism. The purpose for those 'in control' at institutional level is to legitimise enacted practices by aligning them with predominating systemic norms. The extent to which this purpose is performed consciously is likely to depend on the

individual. This misrecognising feature of the teacher-manager's occupational landscape is suggestive of a modernist view of education and learning (Moore 2004:103). It seems to lead to quasi-scientific reasoning about teaching as being historically illegitimate and in need of modernising remedial actions, a likelihood implied by one respondent:

'Prescribing lessons that should be taught in certain ways has *given rise to a lot more thinking*. Teachers are happy now to... reflect on their lessons. Did their lessons achieve the learning objective? ... If you don't [plan using suggested lesson formats] then the whole classroom just disintegrates and that's why we need the strategies, to *keep everything together* to 'teach'. The National Primary Strategy... is bringing together disjointed thinking... It's about bringing that together and leading learning together but also varying strategies for learning styles- *bringing it all together so that it's consistent*... I believe we need guidance... I have an open arms approach to LEA advisory teachers in as much as they have been given the knowledge and information... and we need to listen to what is being said because there is progress being made in all subject areas'. (T13)

The fervour with which attitudes like these were communicated sounds powerful and convincing enough, especially when it came from one of those 'in control' at school level. We can infer from these stated values that there is a clear separation from both an implied practice, which is ineffective in securing educational goals, and from the past.

Teachers can convincingly be depicted as psychologically defended workers, then, with varied individual perspectives and understandings about the degree to which their pedagogical thinking is influenced. This element of uniqueness discerned from a variety of voices was to be expected. However, what was interesting is the limited ideological horizon from which these teachers appeared to configure their values about learning and what it meant to be a teacher. In terms of identifying the possibility for professional misrecognition

among teachers, the psychological effects of the discursive mandate, therefore, became an important feature which demonstrably influenced their occupational thinking and subsequent professional positions.

## **Part 5: Conclusion**

### **Making sense of the research**

This last part of the study provides a summary of the analysis of the findings in the main research activity. The findings are synthesised, and this provides the basis for the final judgements made, based on the original hypothesis, about professional misrecognition.

Bearing in mind the small-scale nature of this study, account is also taken of the limitations of this work as a piece of empirical research. However, the value of work such as this is defended, based on the particular version of insider research which was adopted, and this leads to speculation about the professional relevance of the study, alongside the implications for its contribution to the growth of the school in question as a whole. Finally, this thesis is contextualised as a development of the earlier I.F.S. (Institution Focused Study) pilot work, showing how the enquiry evolved to examine the range of phenomena which had a starting point concerned with the effect of inspection on teachers' enacted roles in the classroom. It led to an identification of several features of teaching as an occupational experience inducing a phenomenon that we can understand as professional misrecognition.

Initially, it appeared in the I.F.S. that it is the occupational reality of inspection which is the major factor in determining teachers' classroom practices. However, it emerged during the course of this research that the way in which a teacher's practice is shaped by schools, and enacted by the teacher, depends

on a complex array of influences. Inspection is one such influence but, as I have discovered, it is not solely responsible for determining why teachers think in a restricted manner about their professional roles.

To put this argument into clear focus, it is useful to summarise the features examined and conceptualised in this research. These were:

- A teacher's sense of vocation: the mantle of the idealised self;
- Working within pedagogic and professional discourses;
- Institutional compliance and the self;
- The reification of 'Good Practice';
- Order versus chaos: finding the right path;
- Professional Trust and Surveillance, or, 'The Gaze of the Other';
- 'Better the devil you know': teachers as psychologically defended subjects.

I have set out to show how these features of occupational life collectively naturalise the prevailing ideological discourses within which the teachers in this school operated and, in the words of Bar-Tal (2002:1), came to serve 'group existence and functioning' within the school, thereby creating an institutional collectivism. Such collectivism allows for individual positioning within prescribed pedagogical discourses, but 'ring fences' possibilities for alternative models of professional practice by limiting the scope for intellectual and occupational self-determination in the context of working as a teacher. These limitations, I have set out to convince you, give rise to a phenomenon of professional

misrecognition, since the apparent individualism teachers displayed during the interviews, once understood as discursive positioning, suggests that they frequently perceived the professional choices at their disposal as self-originating. However, when examined closely, we are able to see that their claimed values were mainly derived from internalised versions of officially mandated practices.

It is clear from the interviews for both I.F.S. and Thesis that the notion of *performance* is a dominant factor in the lived experiences of teachers when asked about how they carry out their work. However, within this group it at first appeared that the effect of performing in order to be a conventional success and to satisfy the 'gaze of the Other' was a transient one. At first, it was thought to stem from a tactic of expediency called into play by teachers only when necessary. Yet the probing of teachers' *ideas* about their pedagogical approaches does suggest that their thinking is being continually influenced by discursive dominance in a more profound way. Its effect is not minor and transient, as the earlier pilot work originally concluded, but is inextricably bound up with the very identity of teachers who profess to know themselves professionally and who purport to possess intellectual independence. However, I am certainly not suggesting that teachers are simply occupational dupes with a limited intellectual capacity to interrogate their own professional positioning. I *am* convinced, though, that the overwhelming and politically powerful nature of prevailing educational discourses does create an occupational climate which teachers are constantly subjected to through potent ideologies. These influences, perhaps, condition and absorb them into positions beneath an

ideologically created professional horizon? As a result, the teachers interviewed have, I think, created a professional mantle that effectively masks a professional core which is determined from sources outside the individual teacher and particular school. They did, though, seem to be conscious that there is the existence of a professional *game* in which teachers were involved, centred mainly on inspection as a critical moment that had to be won both for personal and institutional survival. However, these teachers appeared to have taken up positions of 'contingent pragmatism' (Moore 2004) without necessarily being aware of their complicit professional actions and the argument that their thinking might have been determined by persuasive educational discourses.

Positioned within and between various discourses, these teachers seemed to possess ambivalent attitudes towards some mandated aspects of their work. What is of significance for this study is that the divergence of attitudes and practice, linked to an emerging conflict between personal beliefs and systemic pressures, develops in teachers a defended psychological conditioning in which the occupational 'good' (or self) is 'split off' from the 'bad' possibilities (the only alternative?). I am suggesting that to experience the intellectual discomfort induced by a vague sensation of these 'polarities' is at the heart of professional misrecognition among teachers. It is a dimension of teaching worthy of more research, with the intriguing possibility for extended empirical work beyond the confines of one school, to see if it is an authentic phenomenon identifiable among teachers in different settings. In the context of this school at least, the teachers' mediation of their individual roles - that is between 'self' and system - became a matter of 'finding the right path', one that they could reconcile with



their conceptions about what it meant to be a teacher. Whether or not they could potentially achieve the balance implied by this unconsciously pursued quest depended on their success in reconciling notions of idealised professional practice with their own enacted work in school. To gain the approbation which is a necessary condition for the formalised vindication of an individual teacher's ability (realised through evaluation and scrutiny of different kinds), I have suggested in the course of this research that they are compelled to work within certain pedagogic and professional discourses. In this particular school setting they appeared to do so by *misrecognising* this possibility. These discourses, in turn, required teachers to manifest through their work a compliance with institutional norms and values and to uphold the officially sanctioned version of a reified type of good practice.

While I am not claiming that the involvement of colleagues in examining their values and attitudes through this research is likely to bring about major institutional change or development, it has stimulated a good deal of staffroom discussion about the nature of the enacted curriculum in school. These discussions have had a direct outcome in the form of a staff working party convened to assess the organisation of the curriculum, which was itself precipitated partly as a result of my own strategic influence as Assistant Headteacher, with considerable shared responsibility for policy-making. I hope the end result will be a more self-determining and self-aware interpretation of the statutory curriculum and classroom pedagogies, perhaps going some way to countering the effects of professional misrecognition among us all.

Moreover, the personal value of this whole research enterprise, starting with earlier pre-thesis work, has been significant. As well as being a timely expiation of the intellectual frustrations I have come to associate with being a teacher, it has confounded an initial hunch that inspection is solely responsible for professional re-orientations and the perceived diminution of a claim by teachers to any genuine professional identity. It now seems likely that the 'professional question' no longer applies in a post-modern sense, in which teachers are acknowledged as being ideologically configured *through* their practices. I asked earlier why, though, such a re-configuration of teaching be might happening? I argued that what it means to be a 'professional' is a less clear term now, since teachers increasingly work within a personally constructed, yet ideologically limited, occupational landscape. Being a part of this landscape, teachers, it can be demonstrated, are required to practise under growing external influence, however hidden, or natural, it might seem to be. The ambivalence shown by respondents in their attitudes towards the desire for some professional autonomy, whilst responding to a range of convincing official discourses, was a major finding in this research. The implication is that this situation has led to an eclectic form of professionalism - 'post modern' in its character - that incorporates elements of the 'reflective', the 'reflexive' and the 'extended' professional. This study aimed from the start to introduce a greater element of the 'critical' professional into this post-modern occupational crucible.

At this stage, it does seem reasonable to deduce from the interview data that in this particular case the following judgements can reasonably be made:

- Inspection was just one facet of a teacher's professional experience, among an array of influences identified through this research, that affected the pedagogical understandings of the respondent teachers;
- These influences were found to be ideologically derived and produced educational discourses that teachers were expected to replicate through their work;
- The teachers were not only working within multiple, and sometimes disparate, professional discourses, but they did so by 'misrecognising' elements of these for their own individual beliefs and attitudes;
- While those who took part conceived of themselves as being knowingly complicit in a professional *game*, the success of which determined individual and institutional outcomes, the scope available to them for independent pedagogical thinking was limited by a professional 'horizon' defined through their relationships to discursive and institutional power.

Notwithstanding a note of caution about the danger of overstating these findings, this study has successfully moved beyond the original proposition advanced in the I.F.S. In that (pilot) research, I suggested that the professional nature of the work of teachers was likely to be undergoing a subtle reorientation, thought to be mainly due to the influence of the present system of inspection. I have since discovered, as I have said, that this is just one part of the story. There is, perhaps, a justifiable need for further and more extensive research, to include observable manifestations of enacted pedagogies in the classroom, rather than relying solely on teachers' own narratives about the way they work, which is possibly a shortcoming of this research.

Through this study, I set out to investigate whether teachers may have less intellectual autonomy over their professional work and destinies than perhaps even they had realised themselves. The approach adopted was predicated on a hunch that the inspection process might affect pedagogical approaches more extensively than has so far been acknowledged. It is this alleged misrecognition that my research has aimed to challenge or, at least, to identify. Another colleague in the school, now undertaking his own research on a different feature of primary school organisation, expresses the need for greater intellectual freedom in a manner that converges with my own thinking about these issues. He argues:

‘The solution to any problem consists of knowing how to transform an existing state of affairs into a desired one that has yet to come into being. In order to achieve this, it is necessary not only to have a good idea of the desired end state, but also a... recognition that a problem exists’ (Greenfield 2005b).

What I found by examining this ‘problem’ was a far-reaching series of influences which, together, provide an ideological platform upon which so much of a teacher’s professional identity seems to be built.

If the *extrinsic* value of this research lies in its effect of stimulating institutionally-focused and meaningful discussion, then its *intrinsic* value is in bringing a central question to my own intellectual foreground: ‘Che vuoi?’. Since it is not just by asking questions, but knowing what the question is, that provides an opportunity for intellectual emancipation, this undertaking will have provided me with a precious insight into my own erstwhile assumptions about my very self-identity as a teacher and school leader. It has done so by shedding some light

on the largely unseen 'Dark Side of the Moon' of teaching, as a professional project worthy of occasionally uncomfortable self-examination.

# Appendix 1

## Research Protocol for Colleagues

Thank you for agreeing to help me with my research project. I am very grateful that you are willing to give me this time.

- ❑ The research is part of the Doctor in Education (EdD) course I am undertaking at the Institute of Education, University of London.
- ❑ I shall use a semi-structured interview schedule that should allow the discussion to be flexible and as informal as possible (50- 60 minutes maximum).
- ❑ I ask that participants allow me to tape record the discussion for either full or partial transcription later on. Tapes will be retained by me, but will only be accessible to University of London examiners if this should be necessary. You may, if you wish, listen to the recording of your own interview.
- ❑ The research stems from a personal and academic interest and is not related directly to my current role as Assistant Headteacher. As such, I will observe confidentiality with individual respondents, ascribing codes to individuals in the written Thesis.
- ❑ All those involved will be able to read transcripts of their own interview/s and the final Thesis will be available to read for participants with the right of veto to have interview comments struck from the final draft.
- ❑ The Thesis in its finished form will not be used for any official School purpose.
- ❑ I will not discuss individual interviews with any other person in the School, although my University supervisors will have access to all research material as a part of the assessment process.
- ❑ I am committed to maintaining the ethical standards laid down by London University and am very happy to answer any questions relating to this undertaking.
- ❑ Participants have the right to withdraw at any time up to 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2005 (the proposed submission date).

## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview Schedule (50- 60 mins.)**

**Introduction: thanks/ share Research Protocol. Any questions?**

- 1. Reasons for deciding to become a teacher?**
  - Enjoy most?
  - Enjoy least?
  - Preoccupations/ thoughts on the role?
- 2. Ask about his/her 'educational values'/ philosophy**
  - Classroom style?
  - Class management?
  - 'Standards'?
  - Probe?
- 3. What does s/he think about:**
  - The National Curriculum?
  - NLS/ NNS?
  - QCA curriculum guidance?
  - Probe: approach to meeting these demands?
  - Decisions relating to planning teaching and learning in the classroom?
- 4. Ask if other things influence the way s/he plans the curriculum for the classroom & implements it. Probe...**
- 5. Ask for his/her views on:**
  - Teaching & learning policy
  - Subject policies
  - Where ideas come from
  - Perceived value of the usefulness of policies
  - How teaching style might be influenced
  - Part played by LEA/ co-ordinator meetings/ training
- 6. Ask about any view/s on other external organisations, e.g. Ofsted/ LEA/ training providers**

**Close: thanks/ reassurance re. confidentiality etc**

## Appendix 3

### Extract from School Development Plan 2005/2006

<b>Activity (Curriculum related)</b>	<b>Time scale</b>	<b>Justification</b>	<b>Consultation/ Action</b>	<b>Est. cost</b>
<b>Review setting in Years 2, 5 and 6</b>	<b>Sept 05</b>	<b>Process to be kept under constant review</b>	<b>Leadership group + setting teachers</b>	<b>Nil</b>
<b>Review curriculum provision. Consider options for broadening the curriculum and increasing professional freedom</b>	<b>Sept 05</b>	<b>Concern that there is too much prescription and reliance on QCA guidance/ over- prescribed teaching methods</b>	<b>DHT/ AHT to discuss and form staff working party. Make alterations to School's policy on Teaching &amp; Learning</b>	<b>Nil</b>



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